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TWO HUNDRED
EVENING SERMON
NOTES

By the same author :

ROUGH SERMON NOTES ON
THE SUNDAY GOSPELS

HOMILY NOTES ON THE
SUNDAY GOSPELS

TEACHING THE CATECHISM
etc., etc.

TWO HUNDRED EVENING SERMON NOTES

By the
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SEMPERQUE VIRGINI
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

IN sermon-notes of this kind one has to find some brief way of referring to Our Divine Lord, and that is why the name "Christ" occurs so often in these pages; it represents in fact the "Xt" used by the note-maker, and I hope no reader will be unconsciously influenced to use that particular locution often in the pulpit.

This leads me on to a remark which may possibly be useful to newly-ordained priests, namely that there is always a danger of slipping into the habit of using a single never-varying name or title when referring to Our Lord. This becomes monotonous and is a real distraction to a sensitive ear. Nor is there any need for it. Almost numberless are the variations of phrase which are consecrated by custom to this purpose: Our Lord; Our blessed Lord; Christ Our Lord; Our Lord Jesus Christ; the Son of God; the Son of Man; the Saviour of Mankind; our Divine Master; our Redeemer; the Incarnate Word of God; our Divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and so on with endless changes and permutations of phrase, each one having its own particular shade of significance or degree of solemnity. In one way or another He is the Theme of all our preaching, and we must needs speak of Him frequently in every sermon. A little consideration will enable us to use each time the name or title which happens to be the most appropriate in the context, and thus our discourse may gain something both in freshness and depth.



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A—ON GOD

I.—THE ETERNITY OF GOD

(AND HIS SELF-EXISTENCE)

"See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God beside me."
Deut. xxxii, 39

1. God the Son became man to make God visible to us, and we rightly have the Sacred Humanity constantly in our thoughts and prayers—His Passion, His Sacred Heart, His Real Presence.

Yet He became man to lift up our minds to the Invisible God—His "heavenly Father." And ours too; and if we never thought of God in that way in our prayers—if we always thought of God-made-man and never of God in Himself—we should not be making full use of the Incarnation.

2. Hence this course of sermons: to give us clearer knowledge about God in Himself.

The one true and living God is the proper object of man's mind, and any scrap of knowledge about Him is of greater moment than all human sciences put together.

We *can* know a good deal about the nature of God (meaning here not the mystical experiences of the saints, but, so to speak, *common* knowledge) by our intellect and by Revelation.

It is imperfect knowledge, "as in a glass in a dark manner"; but *real* knowledge; and it helps us to love and serve God better.

3. The things we know about God are arranged by theology under several great headings—the "Attributes"

of God : His Eternity, Infinity, Immutability, Omnipotence, etc. ; each a great secret treasure-house to be opened by the key of meditation.

So to-night about " the Eternity of God."

1. First, God is *self-existent*. " The Supreme Spirit who alone exists of himself." The Ultimate Reality. In a sense, God is the only Real Thing. He *must* exist, for ever. As for creatures, they need not exist ; only exist because God wills it.

As a man casts his shadow on the ground, as the sun makes a rainbow on the clouds, so God draws creatures out of nothing and gives them a sort of existence of their own.

He, and only He, is the Infinite Ocean of all Being.

2. Therefore, He has no beginning and no end. He exists of necessity, therefore *always*.

Fling imagination back before creation : there was no time then, but you can imagine there was ; heap millions on millions of years, a million for every drop of water in the sea or every leaf on all trees, and multiply it all as you will—there was always God. " Before the mountains were made, and before the earth was formed, from age to age thou art God."

So in the future : after thousands of millions of years from now the Life of God will be only just beginning. All the long history of men, and the earth they live on, and the sun and the stars that look down upon them—all that is less than an episode in the eternity of God ; less than a single bar in the endless music of the Life of God.

3. Yet all this is only language for children. Accurately speaking, eternity and time are not to be compared together ; eternity is not simply endless time. God is outside time ; no before or after in Him. His Life is one timeless Moment all gathered up into one point of duration. With God everything is *Now*. All His thoughts are one eternal Thought ; all His joys one immeasurable

moment of happiness ; all the acts of His will, which we count one by one as we watch their results, are in reality one all-sufficient Act of His Will, eternal and changeless.

4. So "God is eternal" means that God lives a life which is without beginning or end, *and He lives the whole of that life all at once.*

Of course such a life can belong only to God. Hence the sacred name, left unpronounced by the Jews out of reverence : I am Who am. *Exod. iii, 13-14.*

And hence that word of Our Lord in the gospel of St. John : Before Abraham was made, I am.

5. Finally, have we any share in this eternity of God ?

Yes, there is this astonishing thing : all through the stillness of those unbeginning years *we* were actually in the Mind of God.

From all eternity was planned the Incarnation, and from all eternity you and I were fixed upon as chosen companions of the Word made flesh.

Time began : the world created : *we* came into existence. All by God's choice, and all making not the slightest difference in God.

But the difference for us ! We are in existence, will be kept in existence, by His grace will share God's own happiness for ever. We shall be lifted into that glorious Life of Eternity, pass into the Beatific Vision, and He will keep us with Him for ever as long as He is God.

6. With the thought of that Eternity before us, how can we help loving our God who loved us even before we were made ?

And how can we possibly risk all that for the sake perhaps of some foolish pleasure that lasts only a few moments ; or for some worldly advantage that would make our short time in this life pass more comfortably. The Eternal things are the only real things : hold fast to that word spoken by the Eternal Son of God : What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss—the eternal loss—of his own soul.

II.—THE INFINITY OF GOD

"Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised: and of his greatness there is no end." Psalm cxliv, 3.

1. We are constantly using the word "infinite" about God: "Infinitely good in Himself"; "Infinite in all perfections" (e.g. Catechism-answer about contrition, 290). What does it mean?

"Infinite" means boundless, without any limits. We use the word sometimes loosely in mathematics (an "infinite series," meaning one which *could* be continued indefinitely); and of our fellow-men ("he was infinitely kind when I was ill").

But in its real meaning only God is infinite; only God exists *absolutely*, unconditionally, free from all conditions or dependence or limitation.

2. God is Unlimited, because there is no one to set any limits to His Being. His Being is not given to Him from outside (as if He were a creature); it is an eternal Fountain of Joyous Life ever rushing up in God Himself, not out of nothing, but out of the hidden depths of His own Nature. And as that Eternal Fountain rushes up it is necessarily beyond all possible limitation or restriction, because it is Existence Itself at its very Source.

Therefore *everything* in God is unlimited and infinite.

3. One way of picturing God's Infinity is through the vastness of space.

Strictly, God is outside Space as He is outside Time, but we have to imagine Him in space; not as if *extended*, of course, but as being wholly present at each point in space.

In that way, God is everywhere. No tiny corner of earth or ocean where God is not present. Also, all through the unthinkable distances of inter-stellar space;

light travels 180,000 miles a second, and some of the stars are millions of "light-years" distant from the earth; the light of some stars has not reached us yet perhaps.

Stand on the farthest star and send your imagination out into the void for millions of light-years—out there God is present just as much as in this church. Quote Psalm cxxxviii, 7-10. (This is called the "Immensity" or "Immeasurableness" of God: He is Infinite in being present everywhere.)

4. But now consider a more important way in which God is Infinite: His *Infinite Goodness*.

Not His Goodness to us (that is another matter), but His Goodness in Himself—that all Good is *in* Him—that (as the Catechism says) God is "infinite in all perfections."

5. In all our actions or desires, it is always some *good* that we are seeking: even if it is a partial good, as when we sin.

That is the way we are made: this seeking for good indicates our inextinguishable desire for God, Who is the One Supreme Good. It is as if we had seen God in all His beauty before we were born, and forgotten it, and any created goodness stirs dim memories.

We can only know God through the finite goodness of the things we see, that He has made (Rom. i, 20).

6. e.g. even the dullest of us can feel the beauty of a fine sunny day in springtime. "This is *perfect*!" we say.

And after that our next thought should be, "*God* is like this!" Because all that beauty and perfection is in God: in some higher way, but still there.

So with all other perfections, not only of nature, but also of art (lovely music), or science (wonders of mathematics), or human qualities (genius, powers of mind and beauties of body, love of every kind, the things you admire your best friend for, the heroism of soldiers and saints), or supernatural perfections (the angelic world, the beauties

of Our Lady's soul, and the glorious heights of the Sacred Humanity): all these are in the Eternal God.

And countless other perfections that have never been created and that we could never dream of.

7. Read Wisdom xiii, 1-5. They are all in God, and they are in God, *infinitely*.

In creatures all these perfections are finite and limited: e.g. a rose has the perfections of a rose only, but not of a lily; still less the perfections of York Minster. Everything has its limits. Well, there are *no* limits in God. He has *all* perfections, and is *infinite* in all of them: He is the Fullness of Being.

8. Thus far we have been trying to know God through His creatures, His goodness through theirs. Quite right, for it is the only way.

But remember, it is the wrong way round: God is not like His creatures, it is the creatures who are like God.

It is God Who is good *first*: "None is good but God." If we can call creatures good—if there is any loveliness in flowers, anything lovable in children, anything wonderful in the saints, etc., etc., it is only because these have caught a glimmer from the Eternal Good.

He is the Source of it all: Beauty itself, Life itself, Love itself—the living Uncreated Good for which we are made.

9. Now you see why the saints, who have discovered all this, disregard all created good, and fall in love with the Uncreated.

And why Scripture says, "Eye hath not seen," etc.

III.—THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD

“Who shall see him and declare him? And who shall magnify him as he is from the beginning?”—Ecclus. xliii, 35.

1. True wisdom is to know how little we know. Especially about God. To recognise His Incomprehensibility, or Unknowableness, is needed for perfect adoration.

2. All the names we give to God, the perfections we attribute to Him, are derived from creatures—the only things we know.

We try to make the names more worthy of God by stripping away limitations, and then our knowledge of God is true as far as it goes.

But we know only in part, in a dark manner; to use the scientific word, we know God only by analogy.

3. This means that when we apply any word to God it takes on not only a higher degree, but a *different sense*; and the difficulty is that we do not know what that different sense is. All we know is that our word *corresponds* to something in God. We know what the word means at this end; what it means at the other end we do not know. Our mind cannot follow our words that far: in Himself God is Unknowable to us.

Realising this for the first time is like getting the first breath of that cold high wind that blows high up on mountains, when the bare rocks are reached, and which seems to say, “You’re coming too high; go back to the houses and people where you are safe.” Bleak, but bracing when we face it; increases our genuine *latria* towards the absolute Majesty of God. “Who is like to the Lord our God who dwelleth on high?” “The King of Ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, who dwelleth in light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (I Tim., i-17 and vi-16).

Let us see what it means.

4. St. Thomas takes the word "healthy" as an example of analogy. *Properly* a human being is called "healthy"; but *by analogy* we speak of a "healthy medicine" or a "healthy occupation" (because they *cause* health in man) or even a "healthy breakfast" (because a *sign* of health in a man).

5. An example nearer to the purpose (also used by St. Thomas) is the sun and its effects.

E.g. We might say that oranges are sunshine because they are nice and bright to look at and because it is the sun makes them grow.

That is analogy; a real connection between two things: sunshine is in both of them, primarily in the sun, but also secondarily, in some way, in the oranges.

6. *Analogical knowledge* is when there are two things with this kind of connection between them, and you know only one of them directly—the secondary one; and the primary one you know only through the secondary one.

For instance, to develop our example: Imagine a man born blind and living in a coal mine. Various people visit him to try and explain what "sunshine" is. One brings him some oranges and peaches: "Try these and you will be tasting sunshine." Another brings some roses to smell, because the sun makes *them* grow, too. Another brings a bar of Sunlight soap to use, and explains that it is called so because sunshine is very cleansing and brightening, like soap. Another brings a cock, because cocks crow when the sun rises. Another brings a gramophone, and plays the Moonlight Sonata, because the moon reflects the light of the sun; or perhaps the Dawn out of Grieg's Peer Gynt.

After all these experiences our blind man would think he knew a good deal about sunshine; and so he does in a way—his knowledge is analogical and true as far as it goes. But what a revelation for him if his sight is given and he goes up into the fields and woods on some glorious spring day!

So with us: only in that faint analogical way can we know God now; but what will it be when the veil is lifted and we look full on God's Face!

7. A further wonder: even to *beati* God remains infinitely incomprehensible; they never exhaust the Vision.

Even with a fellow-man whom we have known well for years, we may some day come on a whole region of his character hitherto unknown. So too with a good song or picture—fresh beauties ever discoverable.

So with the blessed and God: even Mary is still only beginning to know God, is still in her first ecstasy of wonder, and can never know all there is to be known in Him.

Only one mind can comprehend God, and that is the infinite Mind of God Himself.

8. Therefore, finally, no creature can ever *praise* God adequately (because adequate praise implies adequate knowledge and appreciation). All created adoration and love falls pitifully short.

But God has found a way out of that: the Word made Flesh. Jesus Christ can offer—does offer in every Mass—full praise to God even with that human nature of His, because it belongs to the infinite Person of God the Son.

9. So God's claims on Creation are satisfied; and our need too. No matter if our minds are not large enough to hold God, so long as God can be held within the two arms of Mary. Jesus in Crib, on Cross, in Tabernacle—easy to see, easy to love: the Unknowable made known, the Invisible made visible: we have *seen* His glory.

So in a new sense: "Who is like to the Lord our God who dwelleth on high?" Who is like to Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is enthroned for ever in the glory of God the Father, true God and true man, and enthroned, too, on earth wherever His faithful are gathered together round the adorable Sacrament of His love.

IV.—THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

“*I am the Lord, and I change not.*”—Malachy iii, 6.

1. A glorious rainbow all across the sky : each colour lovely and unmistakable : yet each so near another as to merge into it imperceptibly.

So with the Attributes : one is closely bound up with another : to-day we take the *Immutability*, or Unchangeableness of God, and along with it we must study His *Simplicity*.

2. God is infinitely and adorably Simple : that is, His Nature is not made up of different parts or elements (as all creatures are) : everything in Him is One Thing.

True, in a way which we cannot understand, there are Three Persons ; but this makes no difference to His Simplicity. God is simply God.

3. This Simplicity means that all possible perfections are in God, not separately, but as all taken up into One Infinite Perfection.

(A daffodil has the perfections of a daffodil, but not of a rose ; it is *limited* to being a daffodil ; when we strip off the limits of created perfections they all merge into each other and into One Infinite Perfection “most worthy of all love” which includes them all.)

4. So even with God’s Attributes. We think of them as distinct, but they are not so really : they are all one and the same Thing—God Himself.

Just as the rainbow colours are really all one white sunlight.

So God’s Mercy is the *same* as His Justice ; His Love is the *same* as His power, and so on.

There is simply *God* !

5. Hence the Unchangeableness of God: there is nothing that *can* change.

In creatures there can be change because there is always something that *might* be in them, and this possibility can be realised, can become actual. But in God there is nothing that *might* be—everything *is*. God is Fullest Actuality: “Pure Act,” as the philosophers say; we might translate it as “uttermost energy” or “Infinitely Alive”: the *Living* God. In creatures life means constant development and change; but God *is* already everything that He can be; nothing can be added to Him or taken from Him; hence “with Him there is no change nor shadow of alteration” (James i, 17).

6. Lie down on the shore, with your head on the sands, as close as you can to the sea, and watch the big waves sweeping in—see their foamy crests all along the sky, moving with such majesty and such speed—such power when they break, such gentleness when they ripple up to where you are.

So with our view of God. Those great waves coming in are the Life of God as it seems to His creatures—those Attributes that relate to Creation—His Power, Love, Mercy, Justice, Wisdom and so on.

But beyond these tall waves we know there is the vast Ocean itself; and that is like the Life of God in Himself, which is something immeasurably vaster than His Life as Creator. An infinite Ocean, which no ship has ever sailed, no eyes ever gazed on; an Ocean with no shore at the other side, stretching away for ever. Infinite, tranquil, untouched by even the smallest shadow or ripple of change: the Life of God.

7. What *is* it then; what word can we use to describe it—this vast, hidden, unchanging, eternal Life?

Love and Joy are the only words.

“God is Love”: love as between the Three divine Persons.

And God is Joy: His Nature finds Its Joy in contemplating Its own infinite Being, which is Beauty and Truth and Goodness Itself.

Hence Vatican Council, when it has to describe God's Nature, says : "a spiritual substance, one, altogether simple and immutable, really and essentially distinct from the world, being in Himself and of Himself supreme Joy."

So the truest way to think of God is as a limitless Ocean of Joy ; ready indeed to overflow, as it were, and communicate itself by creating ; but having no need to, being infinitely sufficient to Itself : "being in Himself and of Himself supreme Joy."

8. Nothing can ever cause any change in that Life.

God became a Creator, angels appeared from nothing, then the world, then man : no change in God.

God took a human nature, redeemed the world with it, ascended into heaven with it, glorified it for ever in the very bosom of the Trinity : no change in God.

God will make His friends happy with Him for ever : perhaps create other worlds and redeem other races, even with other Incarnations ; but no change in God.

"In the beginning, O Lord, thou didst found the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou dost remain. And all of them shall grow old like a garment, and as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art always the self-same, and thy years shall not fail."

9. From the Attributes we can always draw a lesson for ourselves ; but to-night let us draw no lesson, but be content to forget ourselves, contemplating and adoring that Eternal Ocean of Joy which is God.

And at Benediction, let us use the eyes of our faith, and try to see through the veils of the sacred Host into that infinite Joy of God which is all concentrated there for us.

It is *because* God is so great and unchangeable that He is also so tender ; because we are nothing in His sight that He looks down and loves as with an everlasting love.

"I am the Lord, and I change not" (Mal. iii, 6).

V.—THE WISDOM OF GOD

"I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures."—Ecclus. xxiv, 5.

(Or better Ecclus. i, 1-3)

To-night, on the Wisdom and the Knowledge (or Omniscience) of God.

1. As usual, begin from our experience, and climb up the ladder of creatures to the Creator. So what is a "wise" man?

2. Not the same as knowledge; a man may be full of knowledge and learning, yet not wise. Yet knowledge is part of it—you could not call an ignorant man wise, however deft in business.

3. Say, rather, wisdom is *deep* knowledge: not only knows things but understands them; goes down to roots and causes. When a man knows things as they are, and knows *why* they are so, and what to do and not to do with them, you say, "That's a wise man."

e.g. Shakespeare, who knew human nature so thoroughly—its motives and feelings and greatness and littleness; and you feel that his knowledge was so deep that it must have been practical too; Shakespeare would have made a good magistrate, just as St. Philip was a wonderful confessor, with his gift of heart-reading.

4. Wisdom, then, is *deep* knowledge; going down into the *causes* of things.

It implies not only a mind to understand, but also an object deep enough to be worth understanding. If Shakespeare had lived always on a desert island his wisdom would never have grown. Even the greatest mind is helpless unless it has something *outside itself* to think about.

5. That is true of any created mind whatever, but not of God, who needs nothing outside Himself. Only one Object is worthy of God's infinite Mind : Himself.

That is how God knows and sees all things—they are *in* Him—all *caused* by Him. When we speak as if God “looks down from heaven upon the earth,” it is only a figure of speech ; really, God sees everything mirrored in His own Nature.

All the events of created things have something like the same kind of reality as a story thrown on to a cinema screen ; God has no need to look at the screen ; He wrote the story Himself and chose the characters and produced the play and it is all enacted in His divine Mind from eternity.

6. Try to picture what God sees when He looks upon Himself.

(i) First, He sees the infinite splendour and beauty of His own Essence, of which all created beauty is the faintest reflection.

And the eternal process (or “procession” as theologians call it) of God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

This knowledge of Himself is what makes the Joy of God, and it is shared by the Blessed (as far as created intellect can) in the Beatific Vision.

(ii) Secondly, mirrored in His Nature, He sees all things that are possible, that *might* exist, the creatures that He might create, and all the things those creatures *might* do.

There are millions—an infinite number—of worlds God might make ; He sees all that could possibly happen in each one down to smallest details.

(iii) Out of these millions of possible worlds God created this one ; so (thirdly) He sees—still mirrored in His own Essence—all the creatures which He actually brings into existence. Not a sparrow falls to the ground unnoticed.

Future, present, past—all open to His gaze ; even future depending on our freewill : all *present* to him.

And even our most secret thoughts. Remember, God doesn't have to go by appearances, evidence for and

against ; He *sees*. All our pitiful mixture of motives when we are good, all the excuses to be made for us when we sin ; He knows us *from inside*, better than we know ourselves. "For 'Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men."

(iv) Fourthly, God sees *futuribilia* : those things which might have been in the future if circumstances had been different, but which never will be. (They raise special theological problems as regards God's knowledge, and their number is infinite piled on infinite.)

e.g. if Columbus had turned back and America never been discovered : all history altered.

So with almost any one of our actions, and its possible consequences.

All these might-have-beens are seen by the Mind of God, just as clear and detailed as the things that actually happen.

7. So now we see that God's knowledge and wisdom are of another kind altogether from human wisdom. Not simply *deep* knowledge, but limitless ; not simply knowing causes of things, but *being* the Cause of them. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God ! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord ?" (Rom. xi, 33).

We can just see that God's Wisdom is the only real wisdom, but we have nothing to measure it by.

Signs and traces of it in Creation—order of Nature—instincts of animals—wisdom in man.

But other things too—cruelties in Nature, crimes in men, calamities of war, etc.—where God's Wisdom passes up into regions beyond our gaze, and we stand looking up to heaven dazed and troubled like the apostles when "a cloud received Him from their sight."

But we know that God is "most sure in all His ways" ; He hath made all things in wisdom and in His hands are the ends of the earth ; and however dark certain things may seem now, when God takes us into His confidence in heaven everything will be right beyond our wildest expectations.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts : nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts ”(Isaiaſ lv, 8-9).

8. Even now, not so difficult ; because of Jesus Christ. In Scripture, the second Person of the Trinity is set forth as the Unbegotten Wisdom of God, “ the brightness of eternal light, the unspotted Mirror of God’s majesty ” (Wisd. vii, 26).

So the Wisdom of God speaks in every word of Jesus Christ, from the baby-words that only Mary understood to His final commands to His apostles.

Above all, it was the Wisdom of God (hidden, ordained before the world) which was lifted up on Calvary (I Cor. i, 24, ii, 7).

And it is the Wisdom of God who hath built herself a house (Prov. ix, 1) a tabernacle of God with men, on our altars, and mingles her wine and sets forth her table for us each day in the Blessed Sacrament.

“ O Wisdom, who didst come forth from the lips of the Most High, reaching from end to end mightily and ordering all things sweetly, come and teach us the way of prudence ” ; that we may be no longer held and entangled by the wisdom of this world, but may set our hearts upon Thee, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

VI. THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

"The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. For in his hand are all the ends of the earth, and the heights of the mountains are his. And the sea is his and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. Come let us adore and fall down, and weep before the Lord that made us; for he is the Lord our God and we are the people of his pasture."—Psalm xciv, 3.

1. The Attributes are like some vast range of mountain peaks never explored by man, towering up in everlasting silence, into blinding splendours of eternal snow.*

Their shapes are not the shapes of our earthly mountains—more sublime and mysterious—yet one peak seems to stand nearer to us than the others, and is of more familiar aspect, though its very nearness makes it seem more rugged and terrifying.

This is the Omnipotence of God: the first attribute of the one true God which the human mind (e.g. the Jews) seizes, because it follows straight upon the idea of Creator.

2. God's *power* comes first in the Creed: "I believe . . . and earth."

Our planet and all the life on it: the sun and all the stars of the universe: the still more wonderful world of spirits.

All this exists this moment simply because God willed it so.

And it all hangs suspended over nothingness, kept in being by God's continued creative act. Realize what a floating flimsy sort of existence we have—God has to *keep on creating* us every moment. Suppose (what will never happen) one moment's ceasing of His creative will, and the whole vast Universe, including men and angels and B.V.M. and even the glorious human nature of Our Lord, would vanish like a flicker of summer lightning and there would be once more only God.

* cf. Faber, *The Precious Blood*, c.4.

3. A consequence : all power and energy in creatures is a tiny sharing in God's omnipotence.

A stream moves a mill-wheel ; the flowers push themselves up through the soil ; the birds build their nests so cleverly ; a man sets his mind to it and solves some stiff problem, or gets millions of other men to do his will. All this is power, but God is Power itself unlimited.

4. Moreover, all created power means effort ; but God does all things easily—by an act of His will alone—and *that* is one eternal Act of Will, so there is no effort or change.

“ He spoke and they were made :

He commanded and they were created. ”

5. The existing Universe, vast as it is, is only a corner of the palace of God's Omnipotence. He can do *all* things.

His Mind sees an infinity of possible things (cf. previous sermon) and His Will is commensurate with His Mind. A thousand Universes could spring out of nothing as easily as one.

6. And God is infinitely *free* in His Will. All that He does is done by His own absolutely free choice, just because He wills to do it.

True, God is immutable : His Mind cannot change ; His Decrees are from eternity, but also eternally free.

7. After all this, it is a small thing to say that in the world He *has* made God is all-powerful.

The so-called “ laws of nature ” are no laws for God ; they are simply characteristics given to the material universe by God's Will, and God's Will can over-ride them. If it pleases Him to do so, if He can fulfil some purpose by it, He can make the river flow backward, make a broken limb sound again in a moment, make a dead man live.

In other words, “ miracles ” can happen, because God is God.

8. Hence Catholics are not afraid to pray for miracles and special Providences ; e.g. at Lourdes. Or praying for rain or fine weather.

A Rationalist: "But think what you are doing! The weather depends on a complicated system of fixed causes in the atmosphere—to-morrow's weather is all fixed already—you are asking God to change his mind!"

The Catholic: "Don't be so ridiculous. God is *eternal*. He has foreseen my prayer from all eternity, and granted it (if it is granted) from all eternity too. There may be a change in atmosphere to-morrow on account of my prayer, but no change in God: on that point and all other points God's will has been decreed ever since God has been God."

9. One limit is set even to God's Omnipotence (set by God Himself): the freewill of His creatures.

An awful and terrifying thought, that we turn this gift against the Almighty Creator.

10. Yet once Our Lord said, "With God all things are possible" (meaning, a rich man getting to heaven).

Even where God's Omnipotence is self-limited, Grace can come in and do further wonders.

If we pray for miracles in natural order, still more should we pray for miracles of grace:

for ourselves,
for our friends,
for dying sinners.

11. Our business in life is to do God's will: give our freewill back to Him, putting His will in place of our own.

Not easy, since in that matter the human race made a bad beginning; so God became man, to show us how to do it.

"I come to do the will of Him that sent me." And supremely in Gethsemane: "Not my will but Thine be done." So making God all-powerful even in the world of freewill.

12. And when our will has become identified with God's Will, we may become instruments of His Omnipotence; and wield His Power, by our prayers; share in the making of the Divine Decrees even at the dawn of Eternity.

B—ON THE BEATITUDES

I.—THE POOR

"And seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain, and when he was sat down, his disciples came unto him. And opening his mouth, he taught them saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v, 1-3.

The Beatitudes open the Sermon on the Mount. Importance of the occasion.

On going into the mountain, He had spent a whole night in prayer, and then chosen His twelve apostles (Luke vi, 12-20). Now He comes down to the people. He sits down, and His twelve apostles gather round Him (Matt. v, 1). Then He "lifted up His eyes on His disciples," i.e. all those who followed Him, not merely the twelve (Luke vi, 20), and "opening His mouth" (i.e. to say something more than ordinarily important), "He taught them" in these eight Beatitudes.

By choosing the apostles He has taken the first definite step in actually founding the Kingdom of God; and now in the Beatitudes He pictures the qualifications of true membership.

1. "Blessed are the poor." What poor does He mean? Several classes:

(a) Those who are poor in money and goods, *if* they are also "poor in spirit"—enduring their poverty with good heart. But *not* if they are filled with envy and hatred of those better-provided.

(b) The rich, too; *if* "poor in spirit": renouncing their wealth in their own mind, giving it to the poor, using it as God's stewards. But *not* if they think of their riches as their own. (And "how hardly!" as Christ said of the rich young man.)

(c) Religious who take vows of poverty and have all their goods in common; *if* they are "poor in spirit." But not if they give way to corporate avarice.

(d) Sometimes there are special vocations to a complete and dramatic giving up of *all* ownership and security—always begging one's next meal—a protest against worldly worship of Mammon; e.g. St. Francis of Assisi, St. Benedict-Joseph Labre.

2. Best way of determining what Our Lord means (in this, and all the Beatitudes) is to watch His own example.

During His public life He lived on alms and had nowhere to lay His head; because this way of life left Him free for the work.

But for the Thirty Years He lived as most of us have to live; just making a living.

3. The Holy Family had enough food, shelter, clothing; perhaps even some small luxuries; anyhow, able to afford journeys to Jerusalem.

The point is, they were *content* to have no more than that; no *desire* to be rich.

4. So the poverty of the Beatitude is not really *destitution* (which can never be intended by God), but the ordinary poverty of the vast majority of mankind, *if* they are content with it. "Frugal comfort" (Leo XIII).

Lincoln said, "God must love ordinary people, because He made so many of them." And also, because He lived their life when He came on earth.

5. This Beatitude is put first (St. Ambrose says) because it must be practised first to make the others possible.

Mammon is the great rival of God: so "blessed are the *poor*."

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I live out my life in peace with you.

II.—THE PEACEABLE

"Blessed are the meek : for they shall possess the land."—
Matt. v, 4.

1. This Beatitude, like the first, aimed against worldly idea of Kingdom in mind of contemporary Jews.

They looked for a world-empire of Jews over Gentiles, with great power and wealth for God's People, beginning with an armed rising to clear out Roman oppressors and possess their own land in peace.

Against this : "Blessed are the poor : for *theirs* is the Kingdom of heaven." And now : "Blessed are the meek"—the non-violent—"for they shall possess the land."

2. So for Jews. But His words are meant for all men and all times.

The world worships successful violence, but Christ says there is no true happiness that way. Victory is with the non-violent in the long run.

3. (Especially in the *longest* run : the next life. The Fathers often connect "*ipsi possidebunt terram*" with the resurrection of the just ; they have controlled their anger and other bodily passions in this life, so in the resurrection they will fully "possess" their earthly bodies glorified and "possess," too, the whole earth itself, renewed for their glorious habitation.)

4. But who exactly are the "meek" ?

Nobody likes to be called meek ; the English word is only used in a bad sense now.

The Gospel Greek may be rendered "peaceable." The opposite of anger and violence. Not feebleness either ; but strength good-tempered and good-humoured ; uncontentious : ready to give in, to stand aside ; ready to meet people half-way.

5. As before, study Christ's example. "Discite a me quia mitis sum."

Only towards the scribes and Pharisees, etc., was He violent (at the close of His public ministry) in words, and occasionally in action (driving sellers out of the Temple). Mystery here—their hearts were hardened, but this is only a partial explanation—or He was acting as Prophet, speaking on God's behalf against evil in high places—still the mystery remains.

But except for the Pharisees, etc. (and even with them *individually*, it would seem) Our Lord was ever approachable, accommodating, at everyone's service, tranquil, endlessly patient: with the apostles, with the crowds, with Pilate, with his executioners.

6. Consider especially the episode of the two swords (Luke xxii, 38) and the ear of Malchus (Luke xxii, 49); this final miracle teaches the meekness of strength—meeting violence with the love that works wonders.

7. "Blessed are the peaceable"—"Blessed are the good-humoured"—does it sound too simple and commonplace?

On the contrary, at times of crisis (*e.g.* the General Strike 1926) it becomes clear how simple persistent good-humour may be the highest flight of charity and justice.

The longer we live the more important seem the simple ordinary things like being kind, and genuine, and good-tempered, and patient: the family virtues: everything Christ meant by behaving as children of one Heavenly Father.

III.—THE BROKEN-HEARTED

“*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*”
Matt. v, 5.

1. In these Beatitudes, “Blessed” means “happy.” Happiness is what all men seek; here is the *true* happiness. Our Lord is taking the world’s ideas one by one and turning them upside down. “Happy are the poor; happy are the unaggressive.”

And now, strangest of all: “happy are they that mourn.”

The world is firmly convinced that happiness means pleasure, and lots of it.

No (says Christ); happiness is not the same as pleasure; on the contrary, it comes through mourning.

2. What sort of mourning? Evidently not mere worldly grief; not when we are sorry for ourselves; or when we give way to a sadness that unfits us for our daily duties.

3. Search for answer in Christ’s own example. Twice the Gospels say He was seen to shed tears:

Once, over Jerusalem—on Palm Sunday, seeing it from Mount of Olives, on His way to solemn entry with His disciples—the city so dear to God, so soon to shout for His crucifixion.

Another time, at the tomb of Lazarus, He mourned in sympathy with the sorrow of family and friends: “Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.”

4. Tears over Jerusalem = grief over *sin*.

Tears over Lazarus = sympathy with *sorrows of others*. These are the two main reasons for which we *ought* to mourn. Consider them both.

5. Mourn for *sin*.

(a) For our own sins, first, since for these we are most to blame.

(b) For others' sins—all mankind's—the continual defeating of God's goodness. Like Christ in Gethsemane.

(c) Especially for sins of Catholics—the scandals that always exist in the Church, the sins and stupidities, even in high places, that result in loss of souls. Such mourning may be a special vocation, as in St. Catherine of Siena.

6. Mourn in *sympathy*, for sorrows of others :

(a) First for Christ in His Passion, like Veronica and the Holy Women.

(b) And for the seven sorrows of Mary.

(c) For the troubles of our own acquaintances. Our Lord says, "Weep with those that weep."

(d) For the vast Passion of humanity itself.

7. We need not—should not—yield to sadness or depression over any of these things.

But neither should we cultivate indifference, as a pagan philosophy may do, for the sake of keeping one's own serenity. "You can't do anything to stop it, so don't let yourself think about it." Love cannot say that.

"Blessed are they that mourn"—those whose hearts are open and sensitive to the sufferings of Jesus and all His brethren.

Even if they can do nothing else, they can love and pray.

8. "*For they shall be comforted.*"

Even in this life, with a comfort that the world cannot imagine, much less give. The Holy Spirit—Consolator Optime !

And in heaven : "*post hoc exilium.*"

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. cxxv, 5).

"God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. xxi, 4), and they shall be comforted by Him who made them for Himself and brought them through so many tribulations to the place of their joy.

IV.—THE IDEALISTS

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice : for they shall have their fill."—Matt. v, 5.

1. "Justice" here is simply another way of saying "Kingdom of God." The perfect accomplishing of God's will. Holiness and *uprightness*.

As often in Scripture : e.g. "A sceptre of justice is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Ps. xlv, 7, quoted in Heb. i, 8).

"In holiness and justice before him all our days." Luke i, 7.

2. "*Hunger and thirst*"—these words are the point of this Beatitude. Aquinas (Summa Prim. Sec. LXIX, 3) says it means "doing the works of justice *with a burning desire*."

More *desire* ! Many Catholics, more or less practising, don't *care* much about God's glory ; don't *desire* the things of God (e.g. Sunday Mass even ; or weekday Mass, etc.).

3. "Hunger and thirst" indicates a desire not only great but *overmastering* ; in extremities of hunger and thirst, other desires, such as money or fame, seem of no importance in comparison.

4. The world would say, "Blessed are they that have no hunger and thirst—who have obtained all they want."

But Christ says, "Blessed are they that are always desiring and never satisfied."

Because unlike bodily desires (which subside when satisfied) the more we have of "justice," the more we hunger for it.

"They that eat me shall yet hunger, and they that drink me shall yet thirst," says Divine Wisdom (Eccles. xxiv, 29).

The saints feel that they have never done enough for God (unlike hireling).

Indeed, in God's service we must keep on going higher, or else we are going backwards. Like the angels on Jacob's ladder (says St. Bernard); all ascending or descending, none stationary.

5. God is pleased when we have strong desires towards Him and His will: idealism: burning enthusiasm.

The Angel to Daniel: "Fear not, O man of desires! peace be to thee: take courage and be strong" (Dan. x, 19).

6. Our desire should be cultivated; made constant instead of fitful.

Try for more mastery over our own moods and feelings. Bad moods are less dangerous when recognised and allowed for. Good moods should be kept in memory and recalled again when needed—that is why God sends them.

7. "For they shall have their fill"; in heaven, according to the measure of their holy desires.

And even in this life "they shall have their fill" of that food described by Christ: "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me." And of "the fountain of water springing up to life everlasting."

8. Holy Communion is the sacrament of Desire. First, of Our Lord's desire ("desiderio desideravi"). Secondly, it meets *our* hunger and thirst for God; satisfies it and yet makes us hunger more.

In frequent Communion this Beatitude comes true. O sacrum Convivium in quo Christus sumitur. And yet only a foretaste of that eternal Banquet to which we shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God."

V.—THE COMPASSIONATE

"*Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy.*"—Matt. v, 7.

1. A father loves to trace his own likeness in his children. God wants to see us merciful, because He *is* Mercy (St. Leo).

"Your reward shall be great, and you shall be the sons of the Highest ; for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke vi, 36).

2. In human nature, *tenderness* is what best helps us to understand the attribute in God called Mercy.

Tenderness comes from strength ; we feel tender towards what needs our protection ; e.g. as we feel towards small children, or as *they* feel towards small animals.

Tenderness is the opposite of cruelty ; cruelty is sense of power turned to evil, tenderness is sense of power turned to good.

God is all-powerful and all-good ; and therefore infinite in tender mercy.

3. The world, apart from Christ's influence, is cruel, not merciful.

The pre-Christian world—slavery universal—exposure of infants—gladiatorial shows.

And even now the world easily reverts to cruelty—e.g. in war time.

Christ *created* pity—a new thing on earth. He, too, has his armies—religious orders, S.V.P. brotherhoods, etc.—ever-active at "works of mercy."

4. *Beati miseri-cordes* : those who have room in their heart for the misery of others (St. Augustine, De Civ. Dei. ix, 5).

5. But remember always how delicate a growth mercy is, either in the world or in our own heart.

Really merciful persons rare; the rich have little mercy on poor, and vice versa; the intelligent on the stupid, and vice versa; the old on the young, and vice versa.

How easily even Christ's followers may become cruel instead of merciful: the dreadful things men have done to other men in His name!

Importance of mercy to animals, just *because* they have no rights of their own in regard to us; as *we* have no rights in regard to God.

6. "For they shall obtain mercy."

(a) Obtain mercy for their sins, in the Judgment: as in Matt. xxv, 34, etc.

(b) Obtain Mercy Itself, i.e. God Himself, as their portion for ever.

VI.—THE SINCERE

"Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God."
Matt. v, 7.

1. Pharisees made much of outward cleansings—endless ritual, washings, periods of purification, etc.

Our Lord said this mattered little, but "blessed are the clean of heart."

cf. "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness" (Matt. xxiii, 25).

2. Matt. xv, 1-20, helps us to see what He means by "clean of heart." Pharisees come complaining that His disciples ignored the rule of washing hands before eating; He retorts by quoting one of their rulings made to evade the obligation of supporting parents. Then He calls the people together and says: "Hear ye and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but what cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

And afterwards to His disciples: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies: these are the things that defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

3. These vices enumerated by Christ—what is it that is common to them all?

It is *Greed*.

Seeking one's own advantage, unscrupulously, regardless of God and man; being utterly self-regarding; sacrificing everything and everybody to oneself; *using* people—using people up—even destroying people—for one's own pleasure or advantage.

Therefore "clean of heart" means "clean from greed."

4. Our heart (i.e. our habitual deep thoughts and desires) must be purified, unmixed with selfishness, singlemindedly bent on Will of God.

“Hoc est mundum cor, quod simplex cor” (St. Augustine; and cf. Wis. i, 1).

A muddy fountain produces muddy water (says St. Jerome); and if our heart is muddy with self-seeking the actions that come from it will be muddy too.

5. This Beatitude has a truly glorious reward: “*For they shall see God.*”

This does not mean only in heaven. St. Thomas is very strong on this: that the Beatitude-rewards are given even in this life, according to Mark x, 29-30. “Who shall not receive a hundred times as much, now in this time; and in the world to come life everlasting.” Heaven is the perfect fruit; but (says St. Thomas) the buds and blossoms of springtime fruit-trees are beautiful too, and so are the beginnings of heaven in this life.

The heart of man is like a mirror made to receive and reflect God; if it is a *clean* mirror, it sees God and God sees Himself in it.

6. Looking at our own heart: how much mud in the fountain; what thick dust on the mirror!

Remedy is sacrament of Penance, and its right use.

Some Catholics, in examining their conscience, are much taken up with such things as getting in late for the Gospel on Sunday morning, or doing a little sewing on Sunday afternoon, or eating meat forgetfully on Friday.

These things don't *matter*: the Church makes laws for us and expects us to keep them as well as we can and use our commonsense about them; and nothing of that sort can be a serious sin in an ordinary well-meaning Catholic.

But, in confession, face frankly and give prominence to those sins which show you up as greedy and mean and selfish.

“Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within me!”

VII.—THE REASONABLE

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”—Matt. v, 9.

Peace is Christ’s gift to mankind—“Pax vobis”—the peace the world cannot give.

The “Peacemakers” are those who :

- (a) possess Christ’s peace in themselves ;
- (b) communicate it to others.

1. They make Christ’s peace in themselves, by subduing their body to their soul and their soul to Christ.

A kingdom divided against itself is not at peace : man’s nature, when passions are up in arms, is a divided kingdom; those who subject passion to reason, and reason to Truth Incarnate, make peace and order within themselves and “*fiunt regnum Dei*” (St. Augustine).*

2. Then, possessing Christ’s peace, they are able to spread it around them.

When we are in their presence our passions of anger, greed, suspicion, etc., seem childish.

They infect us with calmness, reasonableness and goodwill ; they make peace without speaking a word.

3. The maxim of the world is “divide et impera”—keep everybody unfriendly with each other.

* “The peacemakers in their own selves are they who control all their moods and subject them to reason, that is to mind and spirit, and have their bodily desires well in hand ; in this way they *become* the Kingdom of God ; for everything in that Kingdom is so ordered that those elements in man, which we share with the lower animals, willingly take their orders from that which is highest and noblest in man ; while that noblest element itself—mind and reason—is obedient to something greater still, namely to Truth itself, the only-begotten Son of God. For nobody can govern inferiors unless he knows how to obey his superior. And this is the peace which is given on earth to men of goodwill ; this is the life of the man who is practised and perfect in wisdom.” *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, Lib. i cap. 2

But Unity was Christ's ideal. His peacemakers *create an atmosphere* of unity.

Both in private life and in public (international).

4. "Filii Dei vocabuntur," because in making peace around them they are sharing in the task of *the* Son of God, who made peace between earth and heaven.

5. Aquinas (who thinks that the rewards in the Beatitudes go up in an ascending scale) says that to be the "children of God" is more than to "see God"; at a king's banquet all the guests would see him from afar, but his children would sit with him at the top of the table and be able to converse with him.

6. Holy Mass is the great Banquet of our King, in which He is ever seeking to realize the perfect unity of His disciples.

What happens just before the Communion: *Pater-noster*; *Pax Domini* at breaking of host; the prayer *Domine Jesu Christe* for unity; and the kiss of peace (of apostolic origin); then the Communion itself, to make us one bread and one body.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" who are helping Our Lord in this dearest wish of His Sacred Heart.

VIII.—THE STEADFAST

“*Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’s sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”—Matt. v, 10.

1. This (say Augustine and Aquinas) is a summing-up of all the previous seven Beatitudes ; and that is why the reward mentioned is the same as for the first one.

A summing-up, because the seven Beatitudes are such a reversal of the world’s standards that we must *expect* the world to give a rough time to those who practise them.

“He leads thee to the climax, He brings thee as far as martyrdom, and He fixes on that as the palm of all blessedness” (St. Ambrose).

2. St. Augustine pictures Christ as a Merchant :

“*I have something for sale !*”

“What is it, O Lord ?”

“*The Kingdom of Heaven !*”

“How is it to be bought ?”

“*The Kingdom by poverty, joy by sorrow, rest by labour, glory by wretchedness, life by death !*”

3. The Jews were sure that, once the Kingdom of God was established, they would suffer no more oppression. They would *rule*. If anybody was to be persecuted it would be the wicked, the Gentiles.

But Christ says : “Blessed are they that suffer persecution.”

Then He amplifies it and makes it personal to His followers : “Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake : be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven ; for so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.”

4. Note especially “*merces vestra*” : to the persecuted a reward is *due*—a real *debt* acknowledged by God.

This is one of the passages theologians quote in proof of the doctrine of "merit." Our Lord is loyal to His friends. If they work for Him and suffer for His sake He will see they do not lose by it.

5. True, there is a dark side about persecution : sometimes Catholics bring it on themselves by their own foolishness or truculence, and then there is no merit in it.

And sometimes those who have been long persecuted develop bitterness and revengefulness.

6. But persecution—like war—brings out many beautiful virtues—courage, perseverance, etc.

It raises ordinary virtue rapidly to heroic degree : e.g. the martyrs, all saints, canonized by their blood.

7. "Merces vestra copiosa est in coelis." What a consolation these words are ! How good of Christ to have told us all this beforehand ; to uphold us during trials.

The disciples recalled this Beatitude joyfully later on : cf. Acts vii, 52, I Peter ii, 20, iv, 13-14. "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed."

8. So we too, if we are privileged to bear anything of this kind, "be glad and rejoice."

The blow on our cheek at Confirmation.

The martyrs enumerated in the Canon of Mass—a reminder to us that at Mass we should offer ourselves for *anything* ; as Our Lord did at the Last Supper, on the threshold of His Passion.

C.—ON THE REASONS FOR THE PASSION

I.—THE PASSION WAS THE BEST WAY OF SHOWING THAT GOD LOVES US

“God proves his love towards us, in that when as yet we were sinners Christ died for us.”—Rom. v, 8.

1. During Lent the Passion is the leading thought ; we dwell on its outward details (as in Stations)—rightly, for what Our Lord suffered for us we should not be afraid to think of. But also we should think of its inner meaning ; what it shows us of the Mind and Will of God.

2. Because the Passion was not absolutely *necessary*. God could have saved man in other ways. The guilt of sin could have been abolished by a word, or by some penance done by man. But God chose the Passion—Why? St. Thomas, etc., suggest several reasons of “*convenientia*.” We will take one each Sunday.

3. The first is the most important, but it can be put briefly, as by St. Augustine (*De Trin.* xiii, 10) when he says the Passion was needed to show us “how much value God set upon us.”

Men don't value what is common, and men themselves are common—millions. The great do not set much value on the obscure millions who are glad enough to get through life from cradle to grave unnoticed.

4. What of God? Does *He* value these teeming millions, white, brown, black, yellow? Does He care much what happens to them in this life, and does He intend them to go on living after they die? Are they worth anything to Him? Are you and I worth anything to the everlasting God?

5. The answer is the Passion. God thinks we are worth that ; He values us at nothing less than that, and pays the price gladly. Even when we have ruined ourselves by sin, God still thinks we are worth all that. So (as St. Augustine says) this lifts up our hope, and we are sure of immortality.

6. So far of how much God values us ; but St. Augustine at once goes on to use a stronger word, which St. Thomas adopts : that the Passion shows us how much God *loves* us. We say it so often that its effect gets lost ; but it is the greatest fact of all : God loves us.

7. I suppose we all feel a sort of surprise when we learn that we are loved by anybody ; we think : “ Why should anybody love me, find me lovable ”—a sort of miracle always.

Sometimes a child who is neglected at home comes to a school where there is a really nice teacher, and finds himself loved for the first time ; puzzled at first, thinks there's a catch in it ; then when the child realises that he really does matter to somebody, you see his whole nature open out suddenly and wonderfully, like a blossoming tree in spring-time.

The Passion of Christ did something like that for all mankind ; it showed men for the first time that they were loved by God.

II.—THE PASSION SHOWS THE EVIL OF SIN .

“ Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you, whom you have from God. And you are not your own, for you have been bought at a great price. Glorify God, then, in your body.”—I Cor. vi, 19.

1. Last Sunday we saw that the Passion is a measure by which we can measure the great love of God for us. To-day we must look on it as a measure of the wickedness of sin.

2. Our Lord once said that He came “ to convince the world of sin,” to make men realise that they are sinners and what sin means.

Paganism (ancient or modern) does not think of sin : men realise they are unhappy, weary and burdened ; but not the cause—that their wills are working against God’s will.

3. People who go against the laws of nature and health suffer in their bodily welfare : always unwell, without recognising cause, perhaps.

So with men going against the will of God. Paganism is feverishly gay on the surface, but inwardly wretched and despairing.

4. Mankind is always in danger of going down that tempting pathway of sin. What can God do to warn them ? Some urgent striking danger-post is needed ; something to startle the most thoughtless.

5. That danger-post is the Cross with Jesus Christ nailed on to it. *That* is what God thinks of sin ; what sin has done to God. He could have forgiven sin in some other way, but there wasn’t any other way of showing us

the full wickedness of our sin ; no way so certain of making us hesitate to sin again.

6. Hence words of text. St. Paul is speaking of sins of impurity, but it is true of all sin. "Bought with a great price" ; every past sin of ours has added some pang to Christ's Passion ; every *future* sin will add a pang that He would otherwise have been spared.

So Christ fulfils His promise and "convinces the world of sin."

7. Our Lady stands at the foot of the Cross, looking at her dying Son, and then turns her eyes on us, asking wordlessly if we have any more sins to commit. The only possible answer is to kneel at the foot of the Cross where Magdalen is, and make an act of contrition, as perfect as we can make it.

III.—THE PASSION AS AN EXAMPLE

"This is thankworthy: if for conscience towards God a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if committing sin and being buffeted for it, you endure? But if doing well you suffer patiently: this is thankworthy before God for unto this you are called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps."—I Peter ii, 19-21.

1. In this first Papal Encyclical St. Peter is explaining a great principle. The first Christians were largely of the slave-class, many enduring lives of bitter oppression, for the slave-owner had unlimited power of punishment and death; no legal redress for slaves. It was easy for a Christian congregation, where there was "*neither bond nor free,*" to become a centre of revengeful talk.

2. But St. Peter says No; the Church has not come to make a political revolution; there are good masters and bad masters, both to be obeyed; Christians must be ready to suffer, and so imitate Christ, who being the Son of God lived a hard life, working with his hands, was in trouble with the powers of this world, and suffered the punishments and the execution of a slave.

3. This is only one application; the principle holds for all and through all life. Life is a hard business, often cruel; bitterly unfair; the best and most deserving people often have the worst time; their very effort to serve God brings troubles on them. That is how life is after the Fall.

To confront it and go through with it without failing God or spoiling ourselves we need some high virtues:

Courage, to see trouble ahead and yet remain steadfast.
Fortitude, to keep on in the very darkest moment when hope has vanished.

Humility, to know our place, that *we* are nothing, God everything; not standing on our rights.

Obedience, or loyalty to duty at all costs.

4. These are the fine soldier-virtues which keep the world going ; and the Church ; and the individual life (e.g. making a success of marriage).

They are the virtues that get people to heaven, because they are the ingredients of final perseverance.

5. It is of just those virtues that Our Lord gives us an example in the Passion ; and St. Thomas says this is one of the reasons why God chose this manner of saving us. It is an example of :

Courage : for Christ saw it coming and met it half-way.

Fortitude : He went on through it when it seemed past breaking-point, and useless, too.

Humility : the Lord of Glory, dying as a criminal slave.

Obedience and loyalty to the will of His Father, even when His Father seemed to have left him deserted.

6. Our Lord could have taught us these virtues by words, and remained Himself above suffering ; but He knew the best way of teaching is by example. It is when we see someone acting nobly in the same circumstances as ourselves that we are moved to imitate. So He would share our human life to the full, especially the hardships and horrors, both of mind and body ; so that everyone of his brethren, however desperately ill-treated in life, however lonely or tortured in death, however darkened and despairing in his own mind, should be able to say, "Jesus Christ has been through all this and worse : I can hold on a bit longer if I don't think too much about what I have to bear, but think about Him instead."

"For in that wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted . . . For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin . . . And whereas indeed he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things that he suffered ; and being consummated he became to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation" (Heb. ii, 4, 5).

IV.—THE PASSION ENABLED CHRIST TO SHARE OUR LOT

“I am come to cast fire on the earth ; and what will I but that it be enkindled ? And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized : and how am I straitened till it be accomplished !”
Luke xii, 50.

1. Another great reason why the Passion was chosen as the means of redemption is the desire of God Incarnate to take on our humanity to the fullest possible extent—not only our nature, but also all its sorrows.

2. Since the Fall man is involved in all kinds of pain, and especially in death. In becoming man to save us God the Son could have avoided all this for Himself ; could have saved us by one prayer, one tiny act of sacrifice.

3. But He would not avoid anything ; since He was to be man, He would go all the way with us. He would take on Himself whatever His brethren have endured.

If men live hard lives, He would accept hardship ; if the innocent have suffered for the guilty, He too would suffer ; if men sometimes endure fearful torments of body or of mind, He would endure the worst ; if all men must die, He too would taste death in its bitterest form.

4. And He *desired* this “baptism” (of blood, so to speak)—as His words in the text reveal—because it would make Him completely like us, sharing our lot without reserve.

5. Such a desire of the Sacred Heart is very understandable (if we may use such a word). We, also, want to share the lot of those who belong to us ; we don’t like to be privileged. c.g. One member of a family would feel ashamed to live in comfort while the others were in poverty.

Or e.g. in war : a good officer wants to share the lot of his men as much as possible ; walks with them, carrying a pack, instead of riding his horse on a long march ; wants to be with them in moments of special danger ; refusing leave when a " show " is imminent. Not only to give them good example (that also, but it is another thing), but a desire to share their lot ; a desire not to be left out of anything the others must endure.

6. Hence Christ too. His Passion and Death means that He would not be left out of whatever humanity has to live through. He has taken us for better and for worse.

7. Especially He foresaw the thousands of Christian martyrs, who would be called on to shed blood and give life for His name. Since that was to be, He would be the King of Martyrs, the first of all.

8. This thought has been a joy to the martyrs in all ages. To us also, in our trials—remember that Christ " having joy set before Him, endured the Cross," plunged into the lowest depths of the great mystery of Pain, because He could not bear to see us there alone.

V.—THE PASSION DRAWS MEN TO GOD

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. Now this he said signifying what death he should die."—John xii, 32.

1. This is the most stupendous promise, or boast, ever uttered on earth. No mere man could say it ; or have any right to draw all his fellow-creatures to himself.

All things come from God and return to Him ; only God has any right to say " I will draw all things to myself." Jesus Christ *is* God, and He said it. To-day we see how his words are fulfilled.

2. St. Thomas (3, xlvi, 4) discusses what kind of death was the most suitable for our Redeemer to die ; and he says crucifixion was chosen because it is the worst and most dreaded, to show us not to give way to fear. The same applies to the whole Passion.

3. Certainly a crucifix is not a pretty sight (it shocks those who are not used to it). A man who is judged by his fellow-men to be unfit to live is being put out of life without pity, has had everything taken from him that makes life possible (even his very clothes that he stood up in) and nailed up there to be stared at and mocked during his last few hours of life. A terrible sight, an appalling sight, not one to dwell on (people might say).

And yet, in *fact*, it has proved to be the most attractive and winning sight ever seen on earth. Christ's words are fulfilled : He is lifted up, and draws all things to Himself. " Now this He said signifying what death He should die."

4. Many good men (martyrs, too) have been beheaded, or hanged, or shot to death with arrows or bullets. No such deaths have the winning power of the Cross. Mys-

tically, its length and breadth and height and depth tell us of the infinite love of God. Pictorially, the wide-open arms of the Sufferer invite the whole world : *Venite ad me omnes*, etc. ; and it is a universal language understood by all men.

5. The marvellous attraction of the Cross draws all. Sinners, because they feel God's love there. The weary and worldly, because the Passion is like a restful shadowy church after the glare and noise and rush of the world. Those who love God, because they can always find in the Passion new marvels. Children are specially drawn, too, for some reason not obvious. Even the rationalist and scoffer is silent and respectful (now) on Calvary.

6. "If I be lifted up." No wonder Christ clings to His Passion still—makes it a sort of permanent thing—the Mass on earth—His five wounds in heaven—stigmata of the saints, and their frequent thirst for suffering.

7. To-day the Crucifix is covered, so that we may have it all the more in our heart. On Good Friday the veil is removed, Christ is "lifted up," and millions of Catholics crowd to kiss the nailed Feet.

What brings them? No command of the Church, no holiday of obligation this time. Simply the mysterious supernatural attraction of the Passion.

8. So we see that God chose this way *because* it would draw us to Jesus on the Cross, that is to God Himself.

At the Adoration of the Cross think that it is *God* who says, "This is what I have done for thee ; what wilt thou do for me ?"

VI.—THE PASSION A FITTING PRELIMINARY TO CHRIST'S EXALTATION

"He humbled himself, being made for us obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; for which cause God also hath exalted him and hath given him the name which is above all names."—Phil. ii.

1. Recall the reasons (for the fittingness of Passion) given already :

- (i) It shows best the *love of God*.
- (ii) It shows best the dreadful *nature of sin*.
- (iii) It is a supreme *example* to us of virtues.
- (iv) It enabled Christ to *identify* Himself with mankind.
- (v) It *attracts* men wondrously.

To-day we consider the final reason for God's choice of the Passion :

- (vi) It was a fitting *preliminary to Christ's exaltation*.

2. The Son of God became man to lift our poor human race up to an undreamed-of destiny, to divine heights of being. This is done through our union with Him : He scales those heights first, and draws us up after Him "by the cords of Adam."

3. So, on Easter day, Christ is to be raised not only to life again, but to a new life above all ordinary human conditions. He is *exalted*—His human body is exalted, as we see from the Gospel accounts—though He veils its full glory ; His human soul too is exalted in ways we cannot imagine ; His human consciousness likewise—that point where soul and body meet so strangely—is no doubt exalted to new heights of blissful union with the Godhead. At the Ascension He thinks it "no robbery" to sit down at the right hand of God and take the Name (Jehovah) which is above all names. Jesus Christ is man

and He is God ; and the full consequences of that unspeakable fact unfold themselves in the Exaltation that comes to Him at His Resurrection.

4. Now, from many places in Scripture we learn that somehow, in God's Will, this Exaltation of Christ was to be *earned* or won by Him. It is to be a *victory* (to-day's palms are a presage of it). A victory means conflict first. He Himself says on the way to Emmaus : " Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory ? " Summing up long ages of prophecy and typic sacred history.

5. It fits in with life in general ; *our* best joys have to be won ; sorrow often comes first—suffering before victory—darkest hour before dawn. Joys are all the greater for being achieved through pain ; they not only *seem* greater, but often *are* greater and more secure. We learn *how to enjoy* by going through the suffering that comes first.

6. So it was to be with Christ : the deeper His torment and defeat and humiliation, the higher would be His exaltation.

7. And not only *His* exaltation, but ours too (see third prayer in Blessing of Palms) ; because ours is bound up with His. It is *our* exaltation He is thinking of : He welcomes the blackest darkness of the Passion, if it means a brighter light of glory for us.

It is all for *our* sake—Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, Exaltation, everything. So think of the vision in Apocalypse, Christ victorious at the right hand of God, and join in the heavenly song : " Benediction and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honour and power and strength, to our God for ever and ever. Amen."

D.—ON PERSONS CHRIST MET ON THE WAY TO CALVARY

I.—THE TWO THIEVES

"He hath delivered His soul unto death and was reputed with the wicked; and he hath borne the sins of many and hath prayed for the transgressors."—Is. liii, 12.

1. Christ doubtless met them in Pilate's courtyard, when formal sentence was passed on all three, with the majesty of Roman law and military ceremonial. The Pax Romana being preserved and vindicated—three criminals lined up before Pilate, bearing their crosses.

2. "With the wicked he was reputed." Scribes, etc., were able to say He had come to a bad end, as they had always said He would.

People in the crowd: "A good deal of truth in what he said, but he went too far." "Just shows how careful you ought to be—I nearly became one of his disciples once, when I saw Him cure a blind man."

3. God, when He became man, chose this way—to die on the gallows, though his every act and thought was for mankind's good.

So if any crucifixion happens to you (as it very likely will if you forget your own interests and follow Christ at all costs) that will be the time to recall that Christ died between two thieves.

4. Procession starts. These two are literally fulfilling "tollat crucem suam et sequatur me." Surely they must both become saints! Is not Our Lord with them, thinking of them, praying for them; perhaps speaking a word of encouragement to them? Yet, as far as we know, only one —

5. Even greatest graces can be refused. One thief watched Our Lord and drew his conclusions ; the other thought of himself.

We may go to Mass and Communion and still stay blind and hard of heart. The only way is to keep our eyes fixed on Our Lord and not to let ourselves count at all.

II.—HIS MOTHER

"Take thy only-begotten son whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision ; and there thou shalt offer him for a holocaust upon one of the mountains."—Gen. xxii, 2.

1. The Fourth Station—tradition places this meeting early on the via dolorosa.

She has not seen Him since His farewell at Bethany on Thursday evening. Now she stands in the crowded street, with John, waiting to see her Son at the mercy of His enemies. He passes—almost unrecognisable, exhausted, bleeding, thorn-crowned ; unable to greet her with more than a look as He is hurried on to His death.

2. No use trying to imagine Mary's sorrow. We cannot, because her love, holiness, and close *mental* intimacy with Christ are far beyond us.

3. She had not bargained for this when Gabriel came. (God doesn't tell us everything at first.) Since Simeon's prophecy she had lived in the shadow of it.

Now it comes, she enters entirely into God's Will. As Christ offers Himself, so does she offer Him ; and becomes Co-Redemptrix, Priestess of Calvary.

4. The wonderful thing is, we, too—though not sinless like Jesus and Mary—can share in the act of Redemption. Just as we are all priests at Mass—"my sacrifice and yours."

Everybody who feels weight of world's sorrow and sin and helps Christ to lift them ; everybody who has suffering and adds it to Christ's Passion—is a Co-Redeemer.

III.—SIMON OF CYRENE

1. Three gospels tell about him—coming out of the country—passing just when Christ's exhaustion made help necessary.

Mark says he was "father of Alexander and Rufus" (so we know he became Christian afterwards). Mark also says he had to be "forced." Carried the cross "after Jesus."

2. It was really a great privilege given to him by God, to do what Peter was not there to do, nor any of Christ's friends. But it did not seem so at the time.

Remember that often God's best gifts are like that. Force of circumstances. God forces us into something which afterwards we would not have missed for worlds.

3. Again : he began by carrying reluctantly, but we can be sure he was soon glad.

That often happens with charity to our neighbour. We don't feel any love for him, but we should force ourselves to act as if we did ; and the love will come.

4. It was a great privilege, but we can have it.

"Inasmuch as . . ." Plenty of people going about with a great cross ; we can often help them, and everytime it is Christ we are helping.

IV.—VERONICA

"My heart hath said to thee : Thy face, O Lord, will I ever seek : Turn not away thy face from me."—Psalm xxvi, 8.

1. We know of her only by tradition, not in gospels. Even her real name unknown—"Veronica" rather a title. It is thought she was not a disciple.

2. What is striking is how practical and prompt she is. Sees Our Lord's condition (perhaps from a window ; and cf. Isaias lix, 2) and in a flash is in the street and pushing through the people and waiting for Him with the veil.

3. Her reward is a great one. How Our Lord loves those who *do* things, who get some work done !

For Himself especially, He does not want *mere* sympathy. We must go on to *do* something for Him.

4. Probably she did not discover the image on the veil till later.

So with us often, not realizing at the time what God has done for us. Graces with "delay-action" fuse.

5. Veronica was alert and resourceful, and she did not let her opportunity go by.

So learn to *seize* occasions of charity. One occasion sent by God and taken is worth ten *sought*.

V.—THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

“Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see the king in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, in the day of the joy of his heart.”—Cant. iii, 11, and Luke xxiii, 27–31.

1. When all men were afraid, women openly showed themselves on Christ's side during His Passion. Why?

- (a) Because for them there was less danger in doing so.
- (b) Nor would danger have prevented them, because women are readier for endurance and sacrifice.
- (c) Because women see facts clearly, not blinding themselves by argumentation as to “principles” or “prestige,” like Caiaphas; or as to expediency, like Pilate or St. Peter.

2. How often prophets had called upon the “Daughters of Sion” to rejoice or mourn over the cause of God and His city?

So here they are, fittingly, to act as chorus in the final drama.

Their tears and cries represent the best in Israel, out of which will come Our Lord's Church.

3. Christ's reply: a short prophetic discourse, with a quotation from His favourite prophet, Osee (x, 8).

Even now that He is rejected Himself He still makes a last effort to warn Jerusalem of the doom that awaits its seeking for an earthly kingdom.

Not a soothing message to His sympathizers! But to tell the truth is always the truest service.

4. So too now, to us who follow the Stations, Our Lord would say: Remember the Four Last Things. Weep not for me, but for your sins against God, and for so many souls that hurry towards destruction.

F.—THE WORDS FROM THE CROSS

I.—THE FIRST WORD

“ And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified him there ; and the robbers, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”—Luke xxiii, 33.

1. Preaching and practising are two different things. Easy to say fine things, not so easy to act on them.

2. Our Lord had preached forgiveness—always made a great point of it. “ Love your enemies,” “ Do good to them that hate you.”

And in many a parable, like the Prodigal Son.

And teaching us to pray, “ As we forgive them that trespass against us.”

“ Forgive and you shall be forgiven.”

3. And now the supreme moment was come to put his preaching into practice. His bitterest enemies had the upper hand at last—had turned the people against him and scattered his disciples ; and after a night and day of torture at their mercy, He is being nailed to the Cross, while the scribes and Pharisees stand round and triumph over His sufferings.

“ And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

4. For three years Our Lord has taught in every way : His disciples, on the Mount ;

The crowds, from the pulpit of many a synagogue and from a boat by the seashore ;

The Jews, from the steps of the Temple.

Now He is teaching the whole world, from His Cross ;

By His sufferings ;

By His silence ;

By His seven words—seven precious mysteries for Christians to meditate as long as the world lasts.

This is the first word ; notice that Our Lord said it more than once—St. Luke's Greek means, "And Jesus kept on saying, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.'"

5. We say we are followers of Christ, and we think we forgive our enemies. But our idea of Christian forgiveness is not much like His.

"Oh, yes, I forgive so and so, of course . . . No, I don't want to be revenged ; would not lower myself to his level. Certainly, I forgive him, but he cannot expect me to be just the same. I never forget a thing like that."

6. But Our Lord asks for something more than that. His phrase is "From your hearts." No mere cold external forgiveness, keeping our hearts still full of bitterness and anger.

To be sure, forgiveness, like charity, is a matter of the will, not of the feelings ; sometimes we cannot help feeling bitter ; feelings are not under full control. Forgive genuinely with your will, and the bitter feelings will gradually vanish.

But if you encourage them—brood over your grievance, making up bitter words to say, planning to get your own back . . .

7. When we think someone is unfriendly to us we should first examine if it is not partly our own fault.

If all his fault, well, then is the time to remember we are Christians. Forgive *and* forget ; try not to let it make a difference in our actions and thoughts. Try to find excuses. (Our Lord found an excuse even while the nails were being driven in.)

8. How can we harbour any unforgiving thoughts, considering our own relations to God? All our hope comes from His free pardon. Our past life one long story of sins and unfaithfulness, forgiven by Him over and over again.

Can we, to whom so much has been forgiven, go out from His presence, newly absolved, like the wicked servant in the parable, still ready to be hardhearted and unforgiving with our fellow-servants?

If there is any spite in us, how can we have the face to ask Him to "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them," etc.

9. One day we shall find ourselves standing before Jesus Christ; the same Jesus Christ who found the excuse for His murderers; who said we should forgive our brother not seven times, but till seventy times seven. And He will want to know how we stand with our neighbour.

"Well, Lord, there is so and so, of course; he really went *too* far. One must draw the line somewhere. What could I do? He would not apologise; everybody said I was right."

That will sound rather thin when we have to say it with the eyes of Jesus Christ on us.

10. If we are going to be Christians, let us be the real thing. Going to Mass and the Sacraments is necessary; but it shouldn't finish there. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another."

II.—THE SECOND WORD

“And one of those robbers who was hanged blasphemed him saying, If thou be Christ save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him saying, Neither dost thou fear God since thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no evil. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Amen I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”—Luke xxiii, 39-43.

In the second word, the Passion already begins to have results; the Precious Blood beginning to flow gains a first victory; Christ just lifted up, begins to draw all things to Himself.

1. The Cross being set up, Pharisees gathered round and mocked. One robber joins in: the other doesn't join—some generous impulse makes him forget his pain and watch what goes on. A rough man, perhaps an unlucky upbringing, certainly a bad life; he has never given thought to Christ's claims. Now on his cross he begins to notice things for the first time in his life—the baseness of the Pharisees, the blunder of the world's justice. He puzzles over this in the midst of his pain; he doesn't know that Our Lord is dying to save him, that Our Lady is praying for him; but the grace of God is rushing into his soul, and soon he opens his mouth, the only one in all that crowd, to say a word for Jesus of Nazareth.

He calls on the first robber, who is blaspheming, to be silent. He uses the kind of reason that may appeal to the other: “Must you too join in with these bloodthirsty Pharisees? Is it decent for one crucified man to revile another?” And then, “We indeed justly, but this man hath done no evil.”

So he says his word bravely, and God rewards him by a still greater grace, so that he is able to turn his eyes to Our Lord and make his magnificent and touching act of faith: “Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into

thy kingdom." Magnificent, because made when Christ's kingdom seems utter delusion. Touching, because so modest ; merely to "remember" the crucified thief who once spoke a word for him.

2. We know enough of Our Lord, and His quick gratitude for anything we do for Him, to know his response beforehand. "Amen I say to thee, this day"

3. A conclusion for ourselves ; the value of prayer for the dying.

This was a death-bed repentance. Non-Catholics sometimes throw scorn on the last-moment absolution, but the Church has boundless confidence in God's mercy.

Mary's prayers saved the good thief. Perhaps they even saved the other—perhaps even while they were breaking his legs he had the grate for contrition. We don't know.

What we do know is that thousands of mankind die every day, and many of them will be saved only by a miracle of grace at the last moment. The salvation of many perhaps depends on our own prayers.

4. People are sometimes puzzled about justice of God. How can He create men whom He knows will lose their souls. So they say, "There is no hell."

Catholics cannot say that, because the Church will always hold fast to our Lord's words. There is such a thing as losing our soul for ever.

But as to what souls are saved or lost, nothing is revealed ; it is a secret of God, and speculation is useless. What we can do, and what Jesus Christ counts on us to do, is to pray for the dying.

5. Prayer for the dying—more urgent even than praying for the dead.

Nothing more pleasing to Christ : a direct helping in His work of redemption ; preventing His Precious Blood from being wasted.

6. The best time of all is in the Mass, at the Memento for the Living. Whenever you come to that part of the Mass, remember those who will die that day. "Heart of Jesus, once in agony, have pity on the dying."

III.—THE THIRD WORD

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said to his mother, Woman, behold thy son. After that he said to the disciple, Behold thy mother.”—John xix, 25.

1. For a correct picture we must imagine the Blessed Virgin Mary at first at some distance from the Cross.

The first thing that happened after the Cross was raised up was a dreadful demonstration of triumph by the priests and rulers. Already in Caiphas’ house the whole council had rushed from their seats and mobbed Our Lord. Now again on Calvary, when they see their work accomplished (and success has been uncertain to the end) and Our Lord safely nailed to the Cross, they lose all self-restraint, and crowd underneath their Victim, shouting up at Him every sort of insult and jest. During first few minutes of crucifixion, if Our Lord opened His eyes, He saw only this crowd of faces full of hatred and derision, and heard nothing but bursts of laughter, reminders that He was Son of God, invitations to come down from the Cross. During this scene the first two words were spoken.

2. After a while the priests and rulers, tired of their violence, or perhaps disturbed by the gathering darkness, scatter somewhat, and a clear space is left by the middle cross. When Our Lord opens His eyes again, He sees three persons who have just drawn near.

First, Mary, His mother ; come, not that she could do anything for Him, but because that was her rightful place—where else could she be ? So there she stands, all His sufferings reflected in her soul. Great as the sea is her affliction, yet she joins her will to the eternal Father’s ;

prays for the sinners for whom her Son is dying ; and all the time she is watching His every movement on the Cross, and keeping all these seven words in her heart.

Second, the other Mary, of whom many sins have been forgiven because she loved much.

Third, the disciple whom Jesus loved. Of all His twelve only one has faith and courage enough to be here now. John has been watching over Our Lady during the Passion and has brought her here for the final scene.

3. It was Our Lord's will, even in His Passion, to make sure, like a devoted son, for the future of His mother. She will be alone in the world now. Who more fitted for such a trust than the disciple who is there ? The reward for his presence on Calvary.

So after a while Mary hears what she has been waiting for—a word to her from the Cross. "Woman," He says, and His eyes turn towards St. John, "there is your son" ; and to St. John, "There is your mother." After that Our Saviour speaks no word more until the three hours are nearly over.

4. For Mary, the most bitter of the seven words, sending the sword deeper. It seemed to make Jesus no longer her son.

How could she be content with John instead of Jesus, with the disciple instead of the Son of God ?

As priestess of Calvary she might have thought of the words of Aaron, the high priest : "This day hath been offered the victim for sin and the holocaust before the Lord ; and to me what thou seest has happened."

5. But consolation in it too, though no lessening of sorrow. According to constant Catholic feeling the beloved disciple represented all Christ's disciples ; He was giving His mother to all of us. And doubtless she understood this, and there and then took us all under her protection, as the brothers of Jesus Christ.

So her unique position in the Church began ; at such time and such a place ! In the midst of her anguish she is called on to take this new responsibility ; as if not qualified

to be Mother of mankind until she had become Mother of Sorrows. She brought forth her firstborn son in joy ; but was spared no pang when she became a mother of Christ's elect. Yet there must have been some consolation in the thought of the fruits of redemption ; for the moment she can almost forget her sorrow for joy that a man—a new man, Christ's mystical human nature, the Church, is born into the world.

6. Ourselves, let us recall the purpose of the Mass—one and the same sacrifice with that of the Cross—and how we can there be present on Calvary with Mary our Mother.

If we stay away from Sunday Mass, we are denying our Master just when He has greatest need of us.

O Mary, Mother of Sorrows, teach us how to hear Mass well. Thou who has seen deepest into the mysteries of the Passion, share thy graces with us thy children whom thou didst receive and accept at the foot of the Cross.

IV.—THE FOURTH WORD

“ And when the sixth hour was come there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour ; and at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabacthani, which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.”—Mark xv, 34.

“ O God, my God, look upon me ; why hast thou forsaken me.”—And the rest of Psalm xxi, 2–9.

1. The great Passion psalm, written hundreds of years before Christ : having immediate reference to the sorrows of Israel, but always regarded as Messianic. (And therefore quoted in derision by the chief priests). It was this psalm that was running in Christ's Mind on the Cross.

So in uttering these words He was thinking not only

of His own sufferings, but of His mission as Messiah and Saviour.

2. Nevertheless, these words were wrung aloud from Him by intense spiritual suffering beyond all imagination. "Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem."

We can dimly conjecture its character with help from scripture.

He knows He is rejected by men, but now an infinitely worse thing, unthinkable, has come upon Him. He feels that He is rejected even by God—by His Father Who sent Him into the world.

3. A hard thing to speak of. Our Lord was truly God. Even His human soul (theologians say) had always at its command all the knowledge and power of God, as well as the unclouded vision of God. How could He feel any separation?

Here is impenetrable mystery. A possible comparison—a lofty mountain peak, at the summit all calm and sun—lower down thick clouds and storms of thunder and lightning. So we may imagine the ordinary faculties of Our Lord's soul and consciousness flooded with desolation and darkness, while all the time the "supreme point" of His soul remains above the waters, steadily fixed on the vision of God. With some such comparison we must be content; not seemly to argue beneath the Cross. Enough to know that He was "made sin" for us. In some fearful way the guilt of the whole world was heaped on Our Lord till He felt Himself in a manner the enemy of God; and this sense of abandonment went on increasing during the three hours until it wrung from Him this cry, "Eloi, Eloi."

4. We can illustrate it from the saints too; because those nearest to Christ have to share His Passion.

Some suffered desolation for years.

St. John of the Cross—"the Night Obscure of the soul."

St. Joan of Arc, chained up in dungeon, guarded always by soldiers, questioned every day for three months; and all that time her voices told her to "speak boldly, fear

nothing ; God would help her, she would be delivered." But she thought it meant a miracle or a rescue. Then one morning they came and said she was to die that day. At first she could not believe it, passionate lamentations, then calmness, but (if we can believe the bystanders) she was filled with dismay and a kind of despair. Her voices, her mission from God, seemed all a deception ; her whole world fallen in pieces round her. Well, there was still God and the Blessed Sacrament ; they let her go to Confession and receive Holy Communion, for which she had so often asked in vain. Even then they worried her with questions about the voices. She said, " I believe in God alone, and not the voices ; they deceived me." And it was not until the very last moment, fastened to the stake and the fire lighted, that God made everything clear to her and the great crowd heard her crying out with a loud voice amid the smoke and flames : " My voices were of God ; they did not deceive me ! "

5. Turn back to Calvary ; contemplate Christ weighed down with the world's sins. What can we do ? Even Mary can do nothing for that mysterious abandonment.

But, unlike Mary, we can stop sinning. We have no right to stand by the Cross and look steadily at the face of Christ ; our place is with Magdalen. Kneeling in tears, we can ask pardon for our past sins and promise that no more sins of ours shall be laid on the lonely soul of the Saviour of mankind.

V.—THE FIFTH WORD

“And they gave me gall for my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”—Psalm lxviii, 22.

“Afterwards Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.”

“And one of them running took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed and gave him to drink.”—John xix, 28 and Matt. xxvii, 48.

Once more kneel in spirit before Christ crucified to consider this Fifth Word.

1. Not physical thirst alone; but as the other six words are full of the mysteries of our redemption, so this too.

Consider His thirst and how we may share it.

2. The physical thirst itself, no light matter. It was a chief pain of crucifixion, as indeed of all wounded men.

Christ suffered this thirst (we may say) for sins of excess in drink. During Passion time we may well share it somehow, with similar intention.

When the executioners heard, one was touched with pity and gave Our Lord some “rough wine,” in spite of remonstrances of the others. Our Lord had refused the usual drugged drink before being nailed to the Cross, but accepts this one. No doubt the soldier did not miss the reward which Our Lord had once promised to those who gave Him even a cup of cold water in His name.

In similar circumstances, when an unpopular act of charity is needed, there is nearly always someone who comes forward (cf. the soldier who made a wooden cross for St. Joan). Would you?

3. The spiritual thirst was threefold :
 For the souls of sinners.
 For the love of His own disciples.
 For suffering.

4. A thirst for salvation of souls, conversion of mankind to His Father: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

We can share it by help for foreign missions, work for conversion of England, prayers for the dying.

5. Thirst for complete love of His own disciples. No one else has a right to our unreserved trust and devotion. Christ can claim it because He is also God. The Blessed Sacrament and Sacred Heart devotion are manifestations of this thirst. Yet how little desire on our side.

6. His thirst for suffering, as a sign of the other thirsts. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised and how am I straitened until it is accomplished."

God chose the way of suffering as the means of redemption, and having chosen it, followed it to the uttermost limit.

And because He chooses and uses it, it is sanctified, and the thirst for suffering spreads.

e.g. St. Francis and his stigmata.

Campion and his companions on their hurdles going to be hanged, drawn and quartered—"but they laugh!" said the crowd, in amazement.

Hence the Church in Lent, seized with this thirst for suffering. Self-denial must be part of every Christian life.

7. So we can share Christ's thirst by our threefold desires. (For salvation of souls: to love Him more; to suffer with Him): and if we will only translate these desires into such actions as we can, then these actions are the vinegar which Our Lord will accept from us as He accepted the drink offered to Him by the nameless soldier, whose glory it will be for ever in heaven.

VI.—THE SIXTH WORD

“*Jesus therefore when He had taken the vinegar said, It is finished.*”—John xix, 30.

1. What is it that is finished?

The work of our redemption.

The chalice of His Passion.

The Paschal sacrifice, desired with desire.

The thirty-three years.

“The work that My Father gave me to do.”

2. Go back to another Pasch, twenty-one years before. The boy of twelve, lost for three days, found in the Temple with the great teachers of the nation—“Did you not know I must be about My Father’s business?” All these years since then He has been about His Father’s business, working for the Kingdom of His Father; and here is the end of it: dying in shame and failure. His Father’s business all gone wrong, it seems—so the world thinks—the staring crowd in the darkness, the chief priests going home congratulating each other, Pilate sitting remorseful in his palace.

But Our Lady there knows, and we know, that it is not so; this *is* His Father’s business, the work He gave Him to do. And it is finished.

3. Because it is by His *death* that we are redeemed.

Not simply, as people often say now, because He was a martyr or a perfect example to us; but because of the Will of God, who *decreed that way* of atoning for our sins; that we should be saved by the death of God-made-man and in no other way.

4. So all through the Passion remember those two things.

(a) That He who is suffering is God.

- (b) That He is suffering for our sins, my sins. "Christ died for sinners of whom I am the chief." "He loved me and delivered Himself for me."

5. "It is finished"; but in another sense it is just begun. The Resurrection still to come—Pentecost—the Church yet to go forth on her world-wide mission, conquering and to conquer.

The results of redemption not "finished" until the number of elect is filled and Christ returns in glory.

6. But all goes back to Calvary. Everything comes to us from the Passion. The one thing that is always first in the mind of the Church—"we preach Christ crucified"; and every Mass one and the same sacrifice with that of the Cross. The consequences of Redemption are ever-growing, but the work of redemption itself was finished then on the first Good Friday once and for all, when "Christ being come, a high priest of the good things to come, neither by the blood of goats nor of calves, but by His own blood entered once into the holies having obtained eternal redemption."

VII.—THE SEVENTH WORD

"In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded; deliver me in thy justice. Bow down thy ear to me; make haste to deliver me . . . Thou wilt bring me out of this snare which they have bidden for me: for thou art my protector. Into thy hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord the God of truth."—Psalm xxx, 2-6.

"And it was almost the sixth hour and there was darkness over the earth till the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And Jesus crying with a loud voice said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And saying this he gave up the ghost."—Luke xxiii, 44-46.

1. It is all over at last. The three hours ended—this loud cry uttered—His head falls forward—slight relaxation of all the limbs—Our Lady knows she is looking on a dead body. Christ Our Pasch is sacrificed. This is the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world, according to the eternal decrees of God now fulfilled.

2. With this loud cry Our Lord breaks the silence of the Cross for the seventh and last time.

Like the silence of the Mass, also broken seven times, by a coincidence no doubt intended by the Holy Ghost.

3. There is no real Mass on Good Friday : the Church is so absorbed in the one Sacrifice.

We too must try to enter into the mind of Christ crucified, and meditate on these last words of His.

4. Once more they are from the Psalms. To understand their significance, recall His desolation and abandonment during Passion. "Why hast Thou forsaken Me."

Then we see that the last words are a tremendous effort of confidence in His heavenly Father, a supreme act of faith in spite of everything—uttered out of the darkness—all consolation shut off from Him—no angel to strengthen Him now—still out of the depths He calls with His last breath upon the Father Who seems withdrawn, and at the moment of death throws Himself blindly, as it were, into the hands of God.

5. Here is a lesson if we want one : something we can never have too much of—trust in God.

Apart from great desolations (unlikely, perhaps, for us, remote from the saints as we are), do we trust God, even as it is ?

Our half-hearted efforts to give up sin—we cease trying at critical moment—is not this because we trust to ourselves, not to the grace of God ?

Our anxiety and bitterness of mind in troubles—not trusting enough in God's wisdom and over-ruling providence.

So easily discouraged by non-success in work, etc.—

because we will not leave success and failure simply to God's will.

More trust in God—we all want that. More of the spirit of this psalm (said every Sunday at Compline).

Let us read it all. Because it is what Our Lord was thinking about as He died . . .

6. "And saying this He gave up the ghost." Death, always the great fear, hanging like a cloud over mankind. All must go through those gates, none comes back to tell.

One thing mitigates its terrors a little—to die in company. To die with comrades is less bitter than to die alone.

A Christian never has to die alone. Death need have no sting for him, because Christ Our Lord died. *He* came back. Death has no more dominion over Him.

We can go down with confidence into the valley of death, because He has been there before us, and waits for us on the other side.

7. We pray, indeed, against sudden and unprovided death; we prefer to set out on that journey signed with the sacraments and strengthened with Our Lord's presence in Viaticum.

But as for death itself, the good Catholic is ready whenever and wheresoever it shall please God; and his prayer every night is, "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: Lord Jesus, receive my soul."

F.—ON APPEARANCES OF OUR LORD RISEN

I.—TO OUR BLESSED LADY

“Behold, thy son liveth.”—iii Kings xvii, 23.

1. Not recorded in the gospels. But Catholic instinct feels certain about it. If He appeared so soon to His friends—Magdalen, the other holy women, Peter—surely first to His Mother.

2. So picture her all alone in her lodging. Praying all through the night. Turning over in her mind every incident of the Passion.

Going back over the thirty-three years, to early days in Nazareth and Bethlehem: the Magnificat: and *now* “His blood be upon us and upon our children”—rejected by His own—lying dead in the tomb.

3. Did she not know of the Resurrection to be? Yes but it could not take away her present desolation (any more than with us the thought of heaven does away with some great sorrow).

Imagine her waiting, calmly, but the sword deep in her heart and the moments passing like years.

4. Suddenly Jesus is there before her. His glorified risen body—the same, yet how changed!

The same Face she knows by heart, and saw last in such anguish those three hours; now full of joy and beyond all pain.

5. See how she flies to embrace Him, and looks long at Him as if to be assured; takes His hands, to look wonderingly, proudly, at the glorious scars!

See how her joy is reflected in Him !

6. They have things to say to each other (seems ages since the last time they talked alone together !).

He thanks her for her com-Passion.

She tells Him of her joy that His work is accomplished.

They speak of the others—Peter, John. And of the future.

7. Or perhaps no need of any words at all.

8. Let us wish her joy—*Regina coeli lætare !*

Remember also that she will have Him only for a short time, and then the weary twelve years' exile between Ascension and Assumption.

Ask her to help us to make *sure* of our salvation and "after this our exile" show unto us that dear Son of hers who is both our Brother and Our God.

II.—TO MARY MAGDALEN

“And on the first day of the week Mary Magdalen cometh early while it was yet dark to the sepulchre.”—And the rest of John xx, 1-18.

1. Two parties (at least) of holy women set forth to finish the anointing and embalming, interrupted by Sabbath rest. Magdalen is with the first party; carrying spikenard in her hands, and in her heart the words, “Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of My burial.”

2. Seeing the rolled-away stone, her companions go forward into the sepulchre (and so see the angels), but Magdalen has already run back to tell the apostles that the tomb stands open.

Peter and John run to investigate, and return home.

3. *“But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping.”* St. Gregory notes that this perseverance is due to the intensity of her love. Many sins had been forgiven her because she loved much; and because she loves much she will be rewarded by Our Lord’s first appearance.

Only love can be counted on to persevere. Intelligence, ambition, fear or imitation, may begin something; but to go on with something day after day and year after year—only love knows how to do that.

4. She looks into the sepulchre and sees the angels, and then turning sees Christ Himself; but not plainly (because of her tears?).

5. *“Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?”* Our Lord knows our troubles, but likes to hear us tell Him. And likes to hear us say we need Him.

6. "*Tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away.*" Another sign of intense love—it reckons nothing impossible. Love is equal to any burden.

7. "*Mary.*" If Our Lord calls us so by our own name, can we answer truly "*Master!*"

8. "*Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.*" A mystery here. Does He mean Ascension-day, or is this some special Easter-day ascending at which we can only guess? But now listen to His wonderful message to the disciples and to us :

9. "*To my Father and to your Father.*" In his preaching Christ never spoke of God as "*our Father,*" but sometimes as "*My Father,*" sometimes as "*your Father,*" thus indicating the unique character of His Sonship.

But now on Easter morning, while still keeping the two distinct ways of speaking, He joins them together at last.

The Resurrection has made the difference and we are no longer servants, or even friends, but "*Go to my brethren and say to them——.*"

10. On the surface, Christ's resurrection naturally lifts Him above ordinary life, and makes a mystery round Him ; the disciples are more inclined now to kneel and adore than to resume the previous easy companionship ; He has entered into a new and higher condition of life.

But in deepest reality, He is more one with His disciples than ever before : He has won that risen life not only for Himself but for us. Hence this message sent to his *brethren*: "*My Father and your Father.*"

Risen and ascended, He can do more for us : e.g. in Holy Communion, where He will be closer to His disciples than even during His thirty-three years. And when at last we join Him in His risen life, no words can describe the perfect communion of mind and heart, which we shall enjoy with Our Lord, and also with each other, in God : "*My God and your God.*"

III.—TO THE TWO DISCIPLES

"And behold two of them went the same day to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem named Emmaus."—And the rest of Luke xxiv, 13-35.

1. For our joy and consolation St. Luke gives us a very full account of how Our risen Lord spent the afternoon of Easter day.

We can only guess for what special personal reasons He chose to show Himself to these two disciples; but it shows how eager He is to begin teaching and explaining the tremendous events of Holy Week—"I, if I shall be lifted up, will draw all things to myself."

2. The two set out early; they have heard nothing later than Peter and John's return from the empty tomb.

They "talked and reasoned with themselves," utterly perplexed by a seeming contradiction: they had known Jesus and His words and miracles, and had been sure He was the Christ, the Messiah promised to God's people—and yet He could not be the Christ after all, since God's people had rejected Him, and all the hopes had come to nothing with His death.

3. Our Lord overtakes them—addresses them encouragingly—their eyes are held, but they feel moved to great trust and free speech towards this stranger. He listens to their explanation and their problem.

4. Then at last He comes in with the word that like a vivid lightning-flash reveals to them a whole new world of thought. "Ought not the Christ to have suffered? . . ."

So, as they walk over the hills, He shows them how it is all part of God's plan, and all set out in the Scriptures when rightly read. He reminds them, no doubt, of the repeated unfaithfulnesses of Israel, the rejection of prophet after

prophet, pointing towards a culminating rejection of God's Own Son ; of the Passion-psalms, such as the one that came to His lips on the Cross ; of the Servant of God in Isaias, the "Man of Sorrows " (c.43) ; and many another passage which the Church still uses in Holy Week liturgy. Some Catholics take almost a pride in being ignorant of the Old Testament, surely forgetting what a great deal it meant to Our Lord, and means now to the Church. "O foolish and slow of heart !"

5. Arrived at Emmaus, they feel they cannot part with this stranger so easily ; and they persuade Him to eat with them.

6. So He made Himself known in the breaking of bread. Not Eucharist, probably ; maybe Our Lord had a manner of His own in the ordinary blessing at meal-times, as in the miracle of the 5,000. But we may *apply* it to Holy Communion, where Our Lord desires us to discover Him.

7. St. Gregory tells us to note that the two disciples did not recognise Him so long as they were only *listening to His words* ; but when they began to *practise good works* (love of neighbour, hospitality) they soon recognised Him.

Our Lord held their eyes because He wished to give them the chance to love Him first as an unknown wayfarer. If we love our neighbour, whom we see, God will show Himself to us and make our hearts burn within us with love of God also.

IV.—TO THE ELEVEN

"Jesus came and stood in the midst of them."—John xx, 19 *et rel.*

Now our Lord shows Himself to the apostles gathered together. The story is familiar through Low Sunday's Gospel.

The scattered apostles gradually reassembled during Easter Day, chiefly through fear of Jews. Various accounts have reached them—the holy women, Magdalen; then Peter (for Our Lord has appeared to Peter, with what consolation to the shame-stricken head of the Church!), lastly the two from Emmaus. Still the apostles know not what to think. Can it be true? And even if He *is* risen, will He still want *them* for His apostles, who had all fled in His hour of need?

Uncertainty and depression therefore. Suddenly Jesus is there—greeting them—showing His hands and side to convince them—asking for something to eat (Luke xxiv, 41). Opens Scriptures to them, showing that all things had to be fulfilled (Luke xxiv, 44) and finally gives His Easter gift.

Consider only one or two special points :

1. His greeting : "*Peace be to you.*" Peace, says Aquinas, is the tranquillity of order. Indeed the Easter spirit is *tranquil*—joyous, but a calm joy.

The tranquillity of the New Order of things; the *disorder* of the Fall put right; Our Lord supreme now over death and sin—right order restored.

2. "*The disciples therefore were glad.*" To see Our Lord had risen indeed; and because His coming lets them hope that after all He still trusts them and means to use them.

It is to reassure them on this point that He chooses this moment to say, "*As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.*"

3. "*Whose sins you shall forgive.*" Our Lord's Easter gift to His Church.

And it is at Eastertime especially that it is used—blessing of the font where original sin is forgiven—Easter duties where even slack Catholics get absolved from their accumulated sins.

"Peace be to you" in Easter duties—the tranquillity of being in the right order or relation to God.

4. The episode of St. Thomas reveals to us

- (a) Christ's love and consideration for the slow-to-believe. Meeting them halfway. (So keep on praying confidently for your non-Catholics.)
- (b) But also His still warmer love for those who "have not seen and yet have believed"; those who understand Him and what He does as soon as they hear of it. Pray for this great grace.

V.—THE APOSTLES BY THE SEASHORE

"After this Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias."—Et rel. John xxi, 1-22.

1. The disciples back in Galilee—their home country and Our Lord's—where they had met Him and followed Him. Rest and quiet by the sea, after the unfriendly crowds of Jerusalem.

2. Their memories of the sea of Tiberias—Christ walking on the water, stilling the storm, preaching from Peter's boat, the miraculous draught of fishes—"Launch out into the deep"—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man"—this last memory especially, because it was then they had left their boats and become fishers of men.

3. While they are waiting they must be doing something. "I go a-fishing." All night and nothing caught.

4. At day-break Jesus calls from the shore : "Have you caught anything, boys?" Casting again at His bidding, they find their nets full.

John recognises Him ; Peter jumps into the sea to reach Him ; then the rest come, and find Our Lord has a meal preparing for them : "Come and dine."

5. It is after this meal that Jesus extorts from Peter the threefold act of charity, makes him shepherd of the lambs and sheep, and speaks of his future faithfulness to death.

But we may leave that for some other time. Now, simply watch the scene and what it teaches us of Our Lord.

6. Note how every one of these appearances in the risen life is planned to be a delightful surprise. He chooses the unexpected moment ; there is a comradely reminder of things past, causing a moment of dawning recognition, then the surprise and joy.

To Magdalen, thinking Him the gardener : "Mary!"

To the women, after the empty tomb : "All hail!"

At Emmaus, "in the breaking of bread."

Through the closed doors, showing His wounds.

On the sea-shore, repeating the old fishing-miracle.

That is the sort of friend to have—one who loves to recall all those things done together in the past—one who is always thinking how to give you a joyful surprise. And that is the sort of friend Our Lord is—even in this life—but especially in the great surprise which He is preparing in heaven where "eye hath not seen," etc.

G.—ON SOME PROPHETS IN ADVENT

I.—ISAIAS

“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel.”—Is. vii, 14. (Communion, 3rd Sunday of Advent.)

1. Isaias is *the* prophet, above all others, of the Incarnation. Advent liturgy is full of him.

2. He lived 700 years before Christ, when Juda was still a more or less independent little kingdom, with big warlike empires all round it.

He was of royal family, and his mission began when twenty years old, with a vision of the Throne of God, and of a seraphim who cleansed his lips. (Is. vi, and cf. *Mundacor meum*.)

Thereafter a long life of prophesying in troubled times, always persuading the Jews to trust (not to political alliances, but) to God alone; God would never allow His nation to perish; and one day the Great King would come and establish God's reign all over the earth.

3. Some passages used in Missal during Advent:

(a) Ecce virgo, as in text. The immediate reference seems to be to some contemporary mother and child, real or imaginary. The prophet is rebuking King Achaz for seeking military help from Assyria, and says that the Assyrians will turn against him, and that a child about to be born now (and named God-is-with-us, as a sign of trust in God) would be living in a land laid waste by the time it comes to the use of reason. But this young mother and her child are a “type”

of the Virgin-Mother to come and the Child who is in very truth Emmanuel. We know that this is intended by the Holy Spirit, because St. Matthew quotes the passage in that sense; and therefore it will always be for Christians one of the most treasured jewels of the Old Testament ; how marvellous and how sweet to find, in the inspired writings of centuries beforehand, a portrait (as it were) of the Madonna and Child.

(b) The branch of the root of Jesse, and the Seven Gifts (Is. ii, Friday in Ember week).

(c) *Laetabitur deserta et inopia* (Is. xxxv, 1-7).

“Say to the fainthearted : Take courage and fear not . . . God Himself will come and will save you.” The passage Our Lord quoted from when the Baptist’s disciples asked, “Art thou he?”

[This passage and the next are from the last part of the book of *Isaias*, which an opinion of the scholars, considered as not-proved by the Biblical Commission in 1904, regards as written by a later inspired writer at the Exile period.]

(d) Another passage, full of the Advent longing for the Redeemer to come : Is. xlv, 1-8 (Saturday in Ember week). “Drop down dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One : let the earth be opened and bud forth the Saviour.”

4. Try and share these Advent desires ; long for your Christmas Communion, when you can make your Christmas gift to the little King.

II.—BARUCH

“Arise O Jerusalem and stand on high : and behold the joy that cometh to thee from thy God.”—Bar. v, 5 and iv, 36. (Communion for 2nd Sunday of Advent.)

1. He was disciple and secretary of Jeremias.

Amongst the exiles in Babylon he composed a confession of Israel's guilt before God, which was sent to the survivors at Jerusalem, with money for sacrifices.

2. In a later part (chapter iv) of the book, also ascribed to him, are four prophecies announcing the return of the captives soon, each poem beginning “Be of good heart.”

3. From this part comes our text : “Arise, O Jerusalem, stand on high : look about thee towards the east, and behold the joy that cometh to thee from God : for behold thy children come whom thou sentest away scattered, they come gathered together from the east even to the west, at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing for the honour of God.”

A wonderful turn of fortune—great events to be looked for !

4. That is the spirit of Advent, too.

“Arise, O Jerusalem”—the true Jerusalem, Catholic Church—“behold the Joy that cometh to thee”—the threefold Joy looked-for in Advent :

Christ our Joy, in the Crib : to all the world.

Christ our Joy, in Christmas Communion : to each singly.

Christ our Joy, at God's right hand, to be our Judge and our Reward : *Sis Jesu nostrum Gaudium.*

III.—PSALM LXXXIV

"Truth is sprung out of the earth ; and justice hath looked down from heaven. For the Lord will give goodness ; and our earth shall yield her fruit."—Psalm lxxxiv, 12-13. (1st Sunday of Advent, Communion.)

1. There is much prophecy in the Psalms, and several are used often in Advent masses ; notably this Psalm lxxxiv.

Written after return from the Exile : thanks God for that mercy (vv. 1-4), recognises that troubles are not yet over (vv. 5-6), and sees ahead the peace and glory of Messianic days.

2. *" Lord, thou hast blessed thy land,"* etc. (vv. 1-6). God's mercy to the exile Jews. Advent, too, means that God's mercy is now putting end to man's long penance after Fall. Purple vestments, but joyous words.

3. Then the joys to come (vv. 7 and 8, used at beginning of Mass every day).

" Thou wilt turn O Lord and bring us to life (life of grace).

And thy people shall rejoice in thee.

Show unto us, O Lord, thy Mercy (in the Crib ; on the altar).

And grant us thy Salvation."

4. Picture of the future land under God's rule :

" Surely his salvation is near to them that fear him :

That glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met each other :

Justice and peace have kissed."

5. Then the words quoted in text : they hold the Church's attention, because reminiscent of *Rorate coeli . . . aperiat terra.*

Our earth, our human race, "yields its Fruit" when Christ comes.

He is the perfect Flower and Fruit, the Crown of humanity, the God-Man for Whose sake all the rest of us are created.

The earth "brings him forth" at the appointed time—God's long preparation of mankind—Jewish religion at last fully expectant—Gentile world-religions arising and feeling after truth—Greek philosophy recognising the One God—Roman peace and order: all converging to make the Coming necessary. The "fullness of time."

Then at last, "Justice looks down from heaven" into the heart of Mary.

IV.—ZACHARIAS

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion: shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King will come to thee, the just and saviour."—Zach. ix, 9. (Offertory for Ember Saturday in Advent.)

1. Zacharias prophesied to the discouraged and despondent Jews who had returned from captivity and were rebuilding the Temple. He revives the chosen people's faith in their destiny; pictures the doom of their oppressors, and the glories of the Messianic Kingdom.

2. A favourite prophet on the lips of Christ.

e.g. "The weightier things of the law, judgment and mercy and faith." Matt. xxiii, 23, Zach. vii, 9.

Also, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be dispersed." Mark xiv, 27, Zach. xiii, 7.

And when He calls Himself the "Good Shepherd" there is a contrast with the bad shepherds who forsake their flock in Zach. xi, 17.

And when He rides into Jerusalem (Matt. xxi, 5) He is fulfilling this text of Zach. ix, 9.

And perhaps that is why the Sanhedrin derisively appoint "thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. xxvii, 9, Zach. xi, 12).

3. So this passage comes to the Church's mind in Advent, because Christ comes as the King of Peace. (See v. 10.)

The Messianic Peace is still unfulfilled. Peace is always struggling into existence, as it were, through a tangle of human passions. But every Christmas ought to strengthen the forces of peace, in the nations, and in daily life.

4. "Behold thy King."

In the fulfilling of this prophecy Christ showed Himself as the unexpected King of Peace: riding an ass instead of a war-horse, surrounded with palms instead of spears, children's shouts instead of trumpets.

So too in His birth.

When a king of this world is born—an heir to the throne—everyone expectant—newspapers full of it—in the palace all is splendour and glory; ministers of State waiting in the ante-rooms; soldiers on guard; church-bells and gun-salutes to announce the event.

Think of that, and then the birth of *our* little King: the stable, the animals, the complete indifference of the great world.

5. "My kingdom is not of this world": it is a secret kingdom in men's hearts. These last few days before Christmas we must look into our hearts and make sure that He is King there indeed.

H.—ON SACRAMENTALS

I.—CEREMONIES ACCOMPANYING THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Christ (following the great Precedent of the Incarnation itself) used outward signs and bodily things for His seven Sacraments to cause grace.

Following His lead, the Church institutes numberless quasi-sacraments to *occasion* grace.

We will treat them in four instructions :

- (a) Ceremonies, extra to their essential outward sign, in Baptism and Confirmation.
- (b) Similar ceremonies with the other sacraments.
- (c) Blessings by the Priest.
- (d) Sacramentals which the faithful can perform themselves.

1. In Baptism there are many, but the chief are :

The “salt of wisdom.”

Exorcism, with sign of Cross on forehead.

Ephpheta, imitating Christ’s miracle.

Oil of Catechumens.

Chrism of salvation.

Garment of baptismal innocence to keep white.

Lighted lamp to meet Bridegroom.

And in each case the recurring refrain : “in vitam
acternam.”

2. In Confirmation :

The cross of Chrism.

The blow on the cheek.

II.—CEREMONIES WITH THE OTHER SACRAMENTS

1. In Confession :
 - (a) Priest's blessing at beginning.
 - (b) "Passio D.N.J.C."—a gift from Church's treasury.
2. In Communion :
 - (a) The "Indulgentiam" absolution.
 - (b) "Ecce Agnus Dei," etc.
 - (c) "Corpus D.N.J.C." Or at viaticum: "Take with you, brother, on this journey . . ."
3. In Extreme Unction :
 - (a) Blessing of house (asking for presence of angels).
 - (b) Prayers afterwards (for "full health of mind and body").
 - (c) Often at same time: Apostolic Blessing (dispositions required).
4. In Holy Order :
 - (a) Hands anointed with oil of catechumens.
 - (b) Giving of chalice and paten (or Gospel-book).
 - (c) Putting on of sacrificial vestments.
5. In Matrimony :
 - (a) Blessing of the joined hands.
 - (b) Of the ring to keep "Full loyalty" and "love each other always."
 - (c) Nuptial blessing of bride (more solemn at nuptial Mass, and omitted in mixed marriage) for long and happy and fruitful married life.

III.—BLESSINGS GIVEN BY THE CHURCH

These may be conveniently considered as of persons, places and things.

1. *Persons.* e.g.
 Minor orders to subdiaconate.
 Clothing and Profession of nuns.
 Coronation of kings.
 Churching of women (*not* purification, but thanksgiving).
 Blessing before childbirth.
 Enrolling in Confraternities.
 Blessing of babies.
 Blessing of sick children, etc.
2. *Places.* e.g.
 Consecration of churches (or blessing, if still under debt).
 Blessing of cemeteries.
 Blessing of houses ; also schools, stables, etc.
 Blessing of fields.
3. *Things.* e.g. (leaving aside liturgical blessings such as font, ashes, palms, etc.)
 Chalices, vestments, etc.
 Holy water.
 Crucifixes, rosaries, medals (often with indulgences).
 Bells.
 Foundation-stones.
 Sick animals.
 Flags and banners.
 Roses, shamrock, etc.
4. What do we mean when we say a thing has been "blessed" (e.g. a Sacred Heart badge) ?
 We mean that the Church has prayed for those who will use it. Those who use it with good dispositions will get the graces due to those prayers of the Church (which are so powerful with God because they proceed from the accumulated merits of Christ and His saints and faithful).
 So a priest's blessing, even *unico signo crucis*, has the whole prayer-weight of Christ and His Church behind it.

IV.—LAY-SACRAMENTALS

The quasi-priesthood of the laity.

Even in some sacraments. Real *ministers* of Matrimony ; they baptize ; and even communicate themselves in certain cases ; they become co-celebrants of Mass by their stipend.

In Middle Ages laymen confessed to each other (e.g. before battle) if no priest available.

Apart from this, there are many lay-sacramentals, e.g.

1. Blessing of food—grace before meals ; also thanks after, which should be thanks for *all* God's gifts.

2. The Morning Offering.

3. The head of the family exercises quasi-priestly functions (as in Old Law) : family prayers at night ; blessing the children ; consecrating family to Sacred Heart ; Recommendation of departing soul.

4. Spiritual reading is a sort of sacramental, especially of the Gospels (indulgence attached). Some read kneeling.

5. Almsgiving is definitely a sacramental, bringing grace to the giver and receiver : and all the corporal works of mercy.

6. Lighting votive candles in church.

7. Mothers offer their babies to Our Lady.

8. Serving Mass ; Altar-Society work ; singing in church.

9. Teaching the Faith to children, lending books to non-Catholics.

10. Gestures. e.g. Sign of cross, genuflection, or “*mea culpa*.”

I.—FOUR SERMONS ON THE REQUIEM GOSPELS

I.—LIFE ETERNAL

(John v, 25-29)

The Requiem mass-words mostly filled with death and Purgatory, but in the epistles and gospels the Church dwells on the ultimate victory.

Of this first gospel, the theme is not death, but Life : Life at its highest : Life for ever.

1. "*As the Father hath life in Himself*"—the inner Life of God—eternal, unapproachable, adorable, infinitely full and inexhaustible.

2. "*So he hath given to the Son also to have life in himself*" : the divine Life communicated (so far as communicable) to the Sacred Humanity, by the mystery called Grace.

3. "*And given him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of Man*" : made him Head of mankind. So that the divine Life flows from him to us.

4. Finally, "*all those that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God,*" when He comes to call His own.

"*And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life,*" in which material bodily life will be at last completely dominated by the higher Divine Life.

5. But this is for those who have begun to achieve this domination while on earth.

Self-denial, therefore : to make sure of joining our Jesus, Who is already living that Life Eternal with God.

II.—THE MERCY OF PURGATORY

John vi, 37-40

God's Mercy is working everywhere and always, but nowhere more strongly than in Purgatory.

1. "*All that the Father giveth Me*" . . . Every redeemed and saved soul comes before Jesus Christ as Judge.

And how laden with sins, nearly everyone; how unfit for God's presence, let alone for the Vision!

Let each of us picture himself as just dead—the freezing loneliness, the dreadful sense of guilt and failure.

2. Then "*And him that cometh to me I will not cast out.*"
A welcome rather. How like Our Lord to say this!

3. "*This is the will . . . I should lose nothing.*" Every soul infinitely precious: not one out of God's mind.

We don't know number of saved, but we do know no soul is shut out of heaven that can possibly be got through by Jesus Christ.

4. Even the saved soul goes into God's presence in rags and filth, like the prodigal son.

Then comes the embrace of God—the mercy of purgatory.

We who pray for the dead are the servants bringing robe and ring.

5. Pray also for the dying: an equal mercy is available for them.

The Church claims it in the Recommendation:

"Remember, O Lord, he is thy creature, not made by strange gods, but by Thee."

"Although he has sinned, yet he has always firmly believed."

6. When we are in purgatory we shall understand for the first time all God's goodness to our own soul.

III.—BREAD OF LIFE

John vi, 51-55.

1. "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven.*" Like the Manna-bread of old (Exod. xvi, 4). Christ says He is the real Manna. He is so, first by the Incarnation: His whole teaching and life and grace is the bread we need; Secondly, by the Blessed Sacrament, in which He epitomizes Himself tangibly.

2. "The living bread." The Blessed Sacrament is Life itself, and life-giving in two results.

3. "*He that eateth . . . hath everlasting life.*" This is one result—the life of sanctifying grace. This is nourished chiefly by the Blessed Sacrament; "life and food of our souls."

So "*except you eat . . . you shall not have life in you*" is true, in different ways, both of Easter duty and of frequent communion.

4. "*And I will raise him up at the last day.*" The second result—life given back even to the body.

Holy Communion is a *pledge* of our Resurrection. We receive Christ's *risen* Body, and It will raise ours.

O Sacrum Convivium!

IV.—VICTORY OVER DEATH

John ii, 21-27

1. The two things to note in this gospel are :
 Martha's beautiful words of faith and hope.
 Our Lord's demand for our belief and allegiance.

2. "*My brother had not died.*" Death is the great Cloud hanging over human life.

Every individual knows that his hopes and joys terminate in death.

The human race too (science would say) must look to ultimate extinction as the solar system cools and freezes.

3. As for the immortality of the soul, it is supposed to be provable by reason, but the proofs are not very convincing—it remains a shadowy truth at best.

4. But Resurrection of the Body—here is not a chilly argument, but a warm real fact : Our Lord risen, and able to raise us.

5. "*Everyone that liveth and believeth in me, shall not die for ever.*" Not indeed *escape* Death, but meet it and overcome it. "*Mors et vita duello,*" etc.

6. So we say with Martha, "Yea, Lord . . . who art come into this world"—come to change this world and everything in it, and especially to free mankind from the empire of Death.

Tu nobis Victor Rex miserere !

J.—ON THE ARTICLES OF THE CREED

I.—“I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY”

1. Reason alone tells us there must be a God. Creation exists ; must have a Beginning and a Cause.

2. Some men atheists ? Because they don't use their reason, or not enough.

Or perhaps badly taught as to God's nature, so that atheism seems freedom.

If a man has right idea of God, he cannot help believing.

3. Right idea of God : Spirit, self-existing, eternal, infinite, omniscient, almighty.

What else ? Well, we can know the Artist from His handiwork—every creature has something of God in it.

4. Pantheists say everything is a part of God, and God is the whole. But no, the truth is much better than that. These things are only hints and reflections of God.

Beautiful things ; but God is Beauty itself.

Wise and good men ; but God is Very Wisdom and Goodness.

5. Don't have little or mean ideas of God. God is everything that is great and generous and true and strong.

Sometimes those who profess to serve Him (and really trying in their way) are foolish and mean and weak. But you must not be misled by that.

You will know what God is like if you look for what is best and finest in man, and from that make up your idea of God, who made man, and was Himself made man.

II.—“CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH”

1. God is eternal, no beginning ; but everything outside God began.

Creation means that all things are called *out of nothingness* by Will of God. And *sustained*—if the creative act ceased, they would again be nothing.

2. Process of creation unknown, or known fragmentarily through science.

Gen. i and ii obviously a didactic poem (rather than scientific historical details) intended to teach that all things are made by the one God, not by two Principles, of Good and Evil ; and that all things made by God are good, etc.

Even as to man, the Church has nothing final to say on the creation of his body, but the soul is a separate creation in each man, and of course in our first parents.

3. We are *creatures*—God is our *Creator*.

Hence absolute dependence on God. Everything, even free will, is a gift from moment to moment.

How ridiculous to set ourselves up, or ignore God !

4. *Why* did God make us ?

He had no need of us—all creatures together could add nothing to God's happiness.

So it must have been for our sake. He is the End ; and we are created to do His Will, and so find our happiness.

5. All other creatures are to help us in that. Hence, “right use of creatures” : all good in themselves : to be used in so far as they help us, and do not hinder us, towards God.

Some to be renounced, some used in moderation ; excess always wrong.

6. The worst thing of all is to make any creature an end in itself, in place of God. Money, pleasure ?

When we use creatures right every action is helping us to our true end.

Hence the “morning offering.”

III.—“AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON OUR LORD”

1. “Jesus Christ.” These holy names often used irreverently (hence duty of reparation), but even misuse witnesses to the power of this name “above all names.” No other ever so filled the world, or had such power over men of every race and character.

2. “Our Lord.” Not fully yet, but He will be. Even now He *is* Our Lord, though we are so slow to give Him His rights.

3. “His only Son”—the Son of God.

By this we mean something definite.

Some would say, He declared Himself Son of God in sense of being Messias. True, but not all the truth.

Some would say that we are all sons of God, and He was the most perfect and Godlike of men. True again, but not all the truth.

We *are* sons of God in one sense, but Jesus Christ is the *only* Son.

4. The eternal Son of God, of same nature as the Father.

This Person—born of Mary, carpenter, crucified—is God.

5. That = the Incarnation : hope of the world and of each soul.

Our hope is not only because of Christ’s sayings, or His example of sacrifice.

But the fact that He was truly God as well as truly man ; and therefore has the power to save us, and the right to our loyalty.

The only genuine Christians are those who can say, “I believe . . . in Jesus Christ His *Only* Son.”

IV.—“WHO WAS CONCEIVED OF THE HOLY GHOST, BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY”

1. That is, Our Lord had no human father. Also, that although Our Lady was the Mother of Jesus Christ, yet she was and remained (as we say in the Confiteor) “ever a Virgin.”

2. This double miracle, something quite outside laws of nature ; done by the special power of God.

Why ?

(a) Because fitting that Jesus Christ should have no other father but God the Father.

(b) Because Mother of God should have glory of virginity as well as of motherhood. (No slur on marriage, but the voluntary giving up of marriage, for those called, is more pleasing to God.)

3. This miracle, like all others, seems fanciful to modern world ; hence a word about miracles in general.

Strictly, a miracle = something done by God which could not happen by the ordinary ways of nature and is recognisable by our senses.

(Hence Real Presence, or striking answers to prayer, are not strictly miracles ; but e.g. raising of Lazarus, or broken bones cured instantaneously, as the de Rudder case.

4. Why does God work miracles ?

This miracle or that for a particular purpose. But in a general way all miracles are to prove the mission of Christ.

5. Unbelievers say miracles *cannot* happen.

Protestants say miracles did happen, but don't now.

Catholics say they can happen (because God made the “laws of nature” and can transcend them), and did

happen, and do happen now, because the life of the Church carries on the life of Christ.

Particular miracles now are all a matter of evidence, on which the Church is very strict ; but they do happen.

6. So don't be shy about miracles. The Catholic Faith is all miracles. The greatest miracle is that God should become man at all ; after that any miracle seems small, even this unique miracle by which Jesus Christ was "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

So thank God for His coming, and for Mary His Mother and the graces that enabled her to say "Respexit humilitatem," etc.

V.—“SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE,
WAS CRUCIFIED, DEAD AND BURIED”

1. If ever a man became notorious in spite of himself, it was this Roman Governor. As long as the Creed is said men will know who Pontius Pilate was, and that he committed the greatest crime in history, for the sake of peace, because he thought it would please everybody.

2. Our Lord's death came about because He disappointed the national hopes of the Jews ; Pilate was there with his Gentile soldiers, and instead of revolt, Christ said, “*Beati mites*” ; thus Jewish leaders were able to turn people against Him. To the people they made Him out a revolutionary in religion—“He calls Himself Son of God and says He will destroy the Temple” ; and to the Roman Governor they made Him out a revolutionary in politics—King of the Jews as against Cæsar. Pilate had sense enough to know it was false, but was afraid of being reported to Rome, and so condemned Christ.

3. That was the reason of Our Lord's death on the natural level. But the real reason and meaning of any event is its reason and meaning in the mind of God.

In the intention of God, and of Christ Himself, the purpose of His death was the salvation of mankind.

For this He came, to redeem us by His death, to take on Him all our guilt and pay the penalty instead of us.

4. God chose this way, not from mere justice, but to make us see the evil of sin and His great love. We are so dull, but the sight of God nailed to the Cross does make us begin to understand.

VI.—“ HE DESCENDED INTO HELL ”

1. Hell here = waiting place of faithful souls who died before Christ.

His soul went to them, to announce Redemption, and lead them to heaven.

2. How does the Church know this ? Christ must have told the apostles.

3. Who was there waiting ?

St. Joseph, and the Baptist.

Holy Simeon, and many such of Israel.

Pagans of goodwill also : Socrates, Virgil, etc.

The Prophets, and those who took their words to heart.

The Patriarchs, with whom began the religion of the true God.

Eve and Adam : O felix culpa !

By all these, in their various ways, the good news is heard and welcomed.

4. These words in the Creed (the only reference to Old Testament) remind us that Christ is the Fulfilment of all that went before.

Just as He is the Meaning of everything since.

5. The Key to the world's history is the Incarnation.

“ I am Alpha and Omega.”

“ Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever.”

VII.—“THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN
FROM THE DEAD”

1. The Catholic faith towers up like some great building, and the Resurrection is the corner-stone.

Our salvation comes from Christ's death, but the Resurrection is the necessary sequel and proof, the final victory over death and sin.

Necessary, too, as pledge of *our* resurrection.

2. Without Resurrection, no certainty or basis of faith. The apostles went forth mainly as “witnesses of the resurrection.”

3. What does the world say?

Unbelievers say the Resurrection was nothing but a legend, growing up in swift Eastern fashion. Against this we set the evidence of St. Paul's epistles and the gospels; and the living memory of the Church herself and the conversion of a whole world—too vast an effect to follow a trivial cause.

Many Protestants say that Christ's spirit survived His death, and showed Itself in apparitions to His disciples, but His Body remained in the tomb and went to dust. They only make up all that because they are afraid of the supernatural, of miracles and God's power.

4. We believe that Christ's soul came back and entered into the Body in the tomb, that by His own power He raised Himself to life and came forth, and is living and active. That is the central fact of our religion. Don't ever think or speak as if death was the one thing to be afraid of, as if it were the end of everything. Jesus Christ has conquered death; He is Lord of death as of all things else.

VIII.—“HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN
AND SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND
OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY”

1. Here we are gathered round the altar for Mass (or Benediction). Not we alone : looking over the earth you see all the altars of the Catholic world, each with its own little crowd.

What is it that brings all these together? Is it the memory of Jesus Christ? No, not any memory, but the reality—Jesus Christ Himself real and living.

2. Over the altar is the crucifix, to remind us of Christ's death. But He is not dead at all. He died ; but rose from the dead—forty days with His apostles—ascended into heaven—and is living there this moment “at the right hand of God the Father,” i.e. equal with God. When the time comes He will come back.

3. “Si exaltatus fuero.” Fulfilled in two ways.

First in the past by the fact of His death. Lifted up on the Cross, arms outspread, He draws all men.

Secondly, in the present, by the fact that He is living. Living and lifted up at the right hand of God, and in the Blessed Sacrament.

4. The whole idea of the Catholic Church is to draw all men to the Sacraments : there, Christ Himself will do the rest in His own way.

IX.—“FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME
TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE
DEAD ”

1. Our Lord certainly will come ; nothing more certain, from His own words.

As to the manner, we do not know much. We have His own description in the language of the prophets (cf. *Isaias* xiii, 10, *Joel* ii, 10, *Daniel* vii, 13, ix, 27, etc.).

But He will come, and the Church is always looking out for Him.

2. And He will come to judge. The living and the dead.

That fact dissipates at once many modern ideas—that there is no particular reckoning—that sin is only a misfortune, or a disease—that a man is responsible only to himself.

No, we have free will, and this life to use it in, and to account for to the last farthing.

3. But believers too may have wrong ideas about the Judgment. Christ will judge “our thoughts, words, works and omissions.”

Some speak as if the judgment will be only on the omissions—whether we have obeyed laws and regulations as to religious duties.

Such people will get a considerable surprise at the Day of Judgment.

4. Christ has given us a general idea of what the Judgment will turn upon. He will be the Judge Himself, so listen hard.

Come ye blessed of My Father . . . for I was hungry and you gave me to eat, etc. (*Matt.* xxv, 34-46.)

There it is : don't say you never heard about it.

X.—“I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST”

1. The Third Person — the Substantial Love of the other Two. Hence “proceeds” from the Father and the Son.

2. Consequently we see where social life, friendship and family life come from.

They are a copy of something eternal, in God Himself.

3. There are few heresies about the Holy Ghost.

But a frequent mistake, amongst Catholics: we are inclined to forget the Holy Ghost—learn something at Confirmation, and never think about Him afterwards.

4. A serious mistake. In a way it is all the same whether we pray to Father, Son or Holy Ghost: each Person is God: in all divine actions on creatures the three persons are acting together.

But God revealed the Trinity to us, so that we should approach Him in varying ways: human nature has its varying moods and needs.

5. It is the Holy Ghost’s work to teach us and sanctify us.

He does this partly by actual graces, sent to enlighten our minds and inflame our hearts at particular times. But chiefly by sanctifying (or habitual) grace right down in the depth of the soul where we don’t know what is going on.

Our part is to say “veni.”

XI.—“THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH”

1. The English love Christ Our Lord but have lost sight of His plan.

Up to Reformation, all Christendom understood that Christ meant all His followers to be in one organised body ; the Reformers did not intend to change that, and common sense would have led men back to unity, but kings and governments nourished religious dis-unity for their own worldly purposes ; and finally men had to make theories to justify the dis-union that had become an accomplished fact.

2. One such theory is that it does not matter what Church you belong to.

Obviously silly, since Churches say opposite things about fundamental teachings of Christ.

3. Another theory : that it does not matter about belonging to any Church at all—Christ did not intend to found a Church.

But He did. We can see this by watching His action in the Gospels, choosing and training the apostles, instituting baptism and Eucharist, and Peter's headship ; and by the way those apostles acted immediately, when He left them to carry out His work.

4. That was His plan : one visible Church for all the world.

It has not gone wrong, except in so far as our human nature does not rise to the height of it.

Christ knew all about the weaknesses of human nature : the weaknesses that keep people out of His Church, and the weaknesses of Catholics themselves. He deliberately accepted all these difficulties for the sake of continuing the work of His Incarnation. “Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.”

XII.—“THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS”

1. Here, communion = “sharing.”

“Saints” = all those who are redeemed and saved :
made holy by Christ.

2. “Communion of Saints” means that distance and death are not real barriers. Just as you have a friend in Australia, so you have friends in heaven or in purgatory.

You are all members of Christ’s body : and therefore in communication with all of them.

Communion not so much in words, but in heart. You can send them a message any time ; it goes through the central office (so to speak), i.e. the Sacred Heart ; but whether you think of the process or not it reaches its destination.

3. Hence prayer to the Saints

prayer for the dead ;

prayer for absent friends, etc., are all the same process.

4. And of course it is in the Mass that the communion of saints works most powerfully and most naturally.

5. You can reach the dead in the Mass ; they will know about your help and can help you in their turn.

Any other way of trying to reach the dead is unlawful : e.g. spiritualism.

Only one true form of spiritualism : prayers for the dead and especially in the holy sacrifice where our visible world touches the unseen.

XIII.—“THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS”

1. The modern world scarcely bothers about this. Scarcely treats sin against God as reality, or as something needing forgiveness. If there are sins they presumably forgive themselves somehow.

2. “Sins are forgiven principally by the sacraments of baptism and penance.”

In the early Church adult converts having repented of their sins and changed their life were washed of sin by their baptism and aimed at keeping their baptismal innocence. The sacrament of penance (“second plank”) became prominent through the problem of those who lapsed during persecution times, but even in the time of the apostles it was available for Christians who committed serious moral faults (e.g. 2 Cor., ii).

3. “Can’t God forgive my sins without a priest?”

Of course He can. But that is not the point. What does He want? What did our Lord say?

4. “Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven.”

To whom did Christ say this?

What did He say such a thing for?

5. And why did the early Christians seek absolution from the Church? They would hardly have done so unless they believed He intended it. It was just as hard for them as for us; harder in some ways, because in the early Church confession was public. You told your sins to everyone—how would you like that? The sacrament is easier now, but it is still Christ’s will.

6. What Our Lord intended. Keep to this. Whenever you hear the Church’s ways criticised, the answer always lies there.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

XIV.—“THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY”

1. At the end of time our body will be re-united to our soul.

We do not know much about the manner, except that it will be truly our own body.

Nor much about the conditions of such a re-united body, except from what we know of Christ's risen life on earth of forty days.

2. This re-union is *fitting*, because the body had its share in the good or evil doings of this life and so should share in the eternal consequences.

So St. Joan insisted on having her banner at the Rheims coronation : it was in all the battles, she said, and ought to be in the glory.

3. Re-union is also *necessary*, because our nature is incomplete without the body.

Man is a unique thing in creation, partly matter, partly spirit ; this unique combination is of his very nature and has to be re-established when interrupted by death.

4. All this seems amazing to the modern mind. People think of the soul (if they believe in it at all) as imprisoned in the body ; the soul spiritual and good, the body hopelessly bad ; get rid of it when the time comes and become an angel. This is all wrong. True that the flesh is counted as one of the three great enemies of salvation ; this on account of the Fall.

But God has repaired the Fall, and the Word was made flesh. That changes everything. Bodily things are not our enemy. We are fed with the Body of Christ. Each of the sacraments is a consecration of bodily things—water, bread, wine, oil, marriage—all these things do God's work.

5. So we must not despise our own body or other bodily things; God made them and does not despise them. He destines them for resurrection and eternity.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth and in my flesh I shall see God."

XV.—LIFE EVERLASTING

1. What happens after our death—that is what all men would like to know.

2. Many suppose transmigration—another life of the soul on earth.

And many suppose that our soul will go on improving in a series of spiritual lives in the next world.

3. Such ideas might be comforting, but they are not true (except in so far as they may be guesses at the doctrine of purgatory).

What happens after death is Judgment.

This life is our one opportunity; at death we lose God for ever or have found Him for ever.

4. Why is heaven called "life everlasting"?

It is Our Lord's own word.

Various grades of life—vegetables, animals, men; then redeemed man with the life of grace which is communicated from the life of God Himself, and becomes (when the last hindrance is removed) the life of glory.

5. Here we see God darkly, then face to face.

For that happiness there are no words. All our words are made to fit happiness in this life—mere hints of God. In God we get the Real Thing, "Life Everlasting."

K—FOR PARTICULAR DAYS OR SEASONS

THE LORD LONG A-COMING

(FOR ADVENT)

"Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour."
—Matt. xxv, 13.

1. In the Second Coming we should consider :
the *certainty* of the fact ;
the *uncertainty* of the time.

"Of that day and hour no one knoweth; no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone."

2. Our Lord's illustration (Matt. xxiv, 48, Mark xiii, 34, Luke xii, 45). The servants left to run the great house while the lord is away : all arranged, duties assigned. The chief steward says in his heart : "My lord is long a-coming," and begins to disbelieve in the return : starts acting as if he were master of the house ; tyrannical to fellow-servants ; feasting with drunken friends. The other servants follow his bad example. Unexpectedly one night the master returns. Porter asleep at his post : every sign of disorder within : the steward lying drunk over a table. Disgrace and dismissal for the steward : punishment, many stripes or few, for the servants.

3. "So shall the coming of the Son of man be."

And (in St. Luke) a final word for Catholics : "Unto whomsoever much has been given, of him much shall be required."

4. Or perhaps (says Our Lord) the steward has been a "wise and faithful servant," and all is going well in spite of the lord's long absence.

"Blessed is that servant, whom when his lord shall

come he shall find so doing. Amen I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods."

"Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant?" Is it I, Lord?

God grant we may hear that word: Euge serve bone et fidelis . . . Intra in gaudium Domini tui!

PREPAREDNESS

(ADVENT)

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight his paths."—Luke iii, 4.

These seasonal reminders of the Church, not empty observances.

It is Our Lord's Church, guided by Holy Spirit. Especially guided in her liturgy.

We should receive Advent reminder as direct message of God to our own soul. Not like a printed circular, but a *personal* message to be attended to.

1. First thing: "Prepare! Be Ready!" The Advent sense of great events about to occur.

2. Ready for what? For anything that may happen:
For the Second Coming
For our own death
For our Christmas Communion.
For chance-occasions of serving our neighbour.

3. For most, ready-ness means penance, change of life. Hence purple vestments; and prominence given to John the Baptist.

4. "Don't be one of those always caught unready," Our Lord is continually saying; and Advent re-echoes His words.

NOW THE HOUR

(FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT)

The Epistle

1. Advent is to get us *ready*.
2. "Rise from sleep." Get up and be ready : not like half-dressed boys turning up late at school.
3. "Put on the armour of light." Not like a soldier without his full equipment : get into your equipment and be ready.
4. "*Put ye on* the Lord Jesus Christ" : as a priest puts on His Mass vestments.
Get into Christ : into His Mind : into His Heart.
5. Then you *will* be ready, for anything.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

(SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT)

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing: that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xv, 13.

1. Another note of Advent: confident hope in God. Relying on Him to any extent.

2. Advent, besides being preparation, is also a *commemoration* of the ages before Christ. (As Armistice-day sums up and recalls the emotions of the War, so in Advent we again live through O.T.)

The few who expected Him—what sublime confidence they needed!

3. So the Advent language is:

"None of them that wait on thee shall be confounded" (Ps. xxiv).

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him" (Ps. cxliv).

"All flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Is. xl).

"Be comforted, my people: fear not: I am the Lord thy God, and I will be thy Saviour" (Is. xli).

And how much more full of meaning for us than when spoken by the prophets (so much easier to have confidence in One whom we know to be of our own flesh and blood).

4. Christ *has* come. Not to make everything perfect by waving a wand, but to carve out a Kingdom for His Father, by His own work and sweat and blood.

As before, so now—believers few. What every Catholic wants (even in order to keep in state of grace) is great *confidence* in Christ. "Be nothing solicitous." He will see us through everything.

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

(FOR MIDNIGHT MASS)

Once again we find ourselves at the holy Midnight Mass by which the Church celebrates the midnight Birth of Our divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; once again we listen to the simple words, so simple and yet so wonderful, in which St. Luke tells us about the way everything happened that night; and with every one of those inspired words there springs up before us a picture ; of the stable and the straw and the dim light of a lamp falling on the new-born Infant, and Mary and Joseph kneeling in adoration ; or the shepherds on the frosty hills under the stars, and the sudden brightness in the sky, and heaven breaking through in armies of singing angels.

We do well to let our eyes and our minds dwell on these pictures of the outward events of Christmas. But—and this is the one thought I want to put in your mind to-night—also we should know how to look further. We must let our thoughts reach out beyond the stable, beyond the hills round Bethlehem of Juda ; we must let them reach out beyond the world itself, beyond the stars even, beyond the very farthest and unimaginably distant star. And then, when we have left all creation behind us, our thoughts reach out towards That which was there always, before anything was created at all ; the Infinite God, from Whom all things come and to which all things return, the Eternal God to Whom all the millions of years of created time are the merest passing moment ; the Almighty God, Whose will is irresistible.

The thought of God, apart from revelation, would be a terror to men ; so helpless we are in face of that Eternal and Infinite Power ; no way practically of knowing its character, its motives, and what it means to do with us.

And then, with that in mind, we look once more at the Crib, and see the full meaning of it. It is a sign, a message

to us out of Eternity. Or, rather, it is the Eternal Himself come to bring His own message ; to tell us that He is a Father, and has a Son, that He has made us to be His sons also, His adopted children to live with Him and be happy with Him for ever ; that we can look to Him and trust Him and rely on Him absolutely, that He is not only Eternal and Infinite Power, but also Eternal and Infinite Love.

That is the Fact that we know from what we see in the stable at Bethlehem, and it is the greatest and grandest Fact that was ever made known. We are right to wish each other happiness at Christmas, since all our happiness and all our hope is built on Christmas. And the whole Catholic religion is nothing but the practical application of that same great discovery or revelation about God.

So then, on this Christmas night, we wish you, the Church wishes each of you, a very happy Christmas ; and she wants you to remember that love of God ; how dear that soul of yours is to God ; how dear you have been to God through all the ages of His eternity ; how Jesus Christ “ gave Himself for us ” as if it were for each one and how, even if yours had been the only soul on earth that needed redemption, St. Joseph would still for your sake have to go round the streets of Bethlehem vainly seeking for shelter, and for your sake Mary would still have to wrap her first-born in swaddling clothes and lay Him in the manger.

AT BETHLEHEM

(FOR THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS)

The joyful mysteries. A peace and happiness of their own, too good to last ; but take care to have our share in it meanwhile. Consider the different *persons*.

1. Shepherds. Simple, poor, *country* people. We in big towns are not near to Nature or God. They were *ready* for the angel's message.

2. Kings. More like us—no angel. Interior voice of God—books, traditions, star. Their faith carried them through.

3. Holy Innocents. They have their place too.

4. St. Joseph. Steady amongst wonders, because of his simplicity and firm trust in God.

5. Our Lady. No words of hers recorded. Her joy is unutterable. We can't understand Christmas unless we keep her in mind.

6. Our little Saviour Himself—what are His thoughts as He lies there ? In His human nature, He has no thoughts at all yet—only a baby. As God, He sees all and thinks of all . . . of us, too, who come to Him in this church, and wishes that we may always be united, and trust God and serve Him faithfully till we all come to Him in heaven.

THE CHURCH'S THOUGHTS AT THE CRIB

(INTROIT FOR SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS)

The Proper of Circumcision same as for third Christmas Mass, which celebrates Christ's birth in Time.

Puer natus . . . filius datus : Son of God eternally, Son of our human race too.

Cujus imperium super humerum ejus : He comes to take up His responsibilities as King.

Or, again (on a day yet to come), the Cross borne on His shoulder is the key which opens His kingdom. For that He is born into the world.

Magni consilii Angelus : Messenger of God's eternal Plan—Incarnation and Redemption.

Then Psalm xcvi: *Canticum novum—mirabilia fecit—omnes fines terrae* : the "new song" of the kingdom at last world wide. The three kingly representatives of the Gentile world are nearing their journey's end.

Then Ep. to Hebrews: "*Locutus est nobis in Filio.*" Our Saviour cannot talk yet, but speaks by His example, of humility, poverty, disregard of worldly standards.

Then the Offertory: *Tui sunt coeli*—tremendous words to address to a baby new-born, who can only sleep and feed and cry—*orbem terrarum et plenitudinem ejus Tu fundasti* ! He is God, this little One ! What can we do to be less unworthy of such a love ?

OUR SALVATION

(FOR CIRCUMCISION, OR HOLY NAME)

1. To-day Jesus got His name = "Saviour."
Mass to-day full of "salvation."

2. Our salvation always = salvation from sin.
But it has a different sound in different feasts.
Good Friday: Christ's suffering.

Easter: Christ's personal triumph—led captivity captive.

Corpus Christi: His work in each soul.

All Saints: the Church triumphant.

Christmas: the beginning—all hope: "the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared."

3. Quite right to rejoice, looking at our salvation from Christ's point of view, identifying ourselves with Him.

But remember we can't be saved against our will.
Effort needed.

4. What a dreadful thing it would be after God has done all this—given Himself so recklessly—Bethlehem, Calvary, Eucharist—what a dreadful thing if you or I missed altogether our share in it—got left out through our own fault, because all that generosity of God found no answer in our heart!

It needn't happen. The generosity *is* there, if we like to call on it; if we think often enough of our salvation and Saviour.

HOLY NAME

"No other name under heaven given to man whereby we must be saved."

1. Saviour. "To save" means to rescue when all seems lost. e.g. "There seems to be a fire starting in your back kitchen" = very useful, but not *saving*.

2. We honour those who save: firemen, lifeboatmen, doctors, soldiers, rescuers in coal-mine.

3. Why? Because there is always *risk* in saving . . .

4. So with this business of saving souls that Christ started. Full of risks and dangers. The world doesn't want to be saved; anyone who sets out to save souls is beginning an endless Sisyphus-like work; must relinquish ease and peace of mind.

5. So Christ. His work of saving was not a thing that happened to come to Him. It was His chief work, what He came for. Always in the front of His mind. "To give His life a ransom for many." "Good shepherd giveth His life for His flock." "To seek and to save that which was lost."

6. So honour Christ above all saviours: a Name above all names.

We were lost utterly, and He saved us. We must let ourselves be saved, not be like a foolish drowning man.

DEVOTION TOWARDS THE HOLY NAME

(FEAST OF HOLY NAME)

1. Honoured because reminds us of our salvation.
Also its power. "In my name they shall cast out devils."
Mark xvi, 17.

"If you ask the Father anything in my name."
So the Church always says "*per Dominum*," etc.

2. Devotion to Holy Name began at Annunciation.

3. But St. Bernardine of Siena propagated it most, with his painted tablet (I H S with rays) and added it in *Ave Maria*.

4. St. Bernard's love for it.

"Sunshine of life, food of the soul." (See sixth lesson of the Feast.)

5. Bow your head when it is used.

Inward act of reparation when you hear it used irreverently.

THE HIDDEN GOD

(FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY)

"*Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour.*"—Isaias xlv, 15 (Alleluia-verse of Mass).

I. In the book of Isaias, c. 45, the prophet visions the days of the Deliverer; and how the nations—Egypt, Ethiopia, Saba—shall put themselves under the rule of the true God, and say to the once-despised Jewish people: "Only in thee is God; and there is no God besides thee. Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour."

To-day these words are indeed on lips of all nations for the Church uses them in the Mass.

II. Verily O Jesus, thou art a hidden God:

1. In the Holy Family at Bethlehem, Nazareth. Such an unobtrusive entry of God into His own world. Thirty years of waiting unnoticed.

2. Now in the Blessed Sacrament. Even his *human* nature hidden this time.

3. Also in His grace-work in souls—our own soul or others. Grace is too deep and secret to be seen: sometimes we see its results, but the supernatural life-process itself must be taken on faith. Vere Deus absconditus.

III. Adore the God-man in all these three hiding places. This divine shyness of God as Saviour—His chosen way of working—"Seek and ye shall find"—we must adapt ourselves to it: that is, we must go often to Holy Communion, and have great faith in the secret power stored up in us: the supernatural vitality which gives us no sign of its presence, but which is there all the time, as we discover unexpectedly just when our need of it is greatest.

FAMILY LIFE

(FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME)

1. The most obvious field for growing in virtue. *Main* field for most.

If we are getting holier at all, it ought to show itself here.

2. Great scope. Family life is a delicate *balance*—so easily upset. (Like ingredients in a complicated piece of cooking.)

“Charity—joy—peace—patience,” etc.

3. Christ, Who came to teach us the whole art of life, found a sufficient field for thirty years in the home at Nazareth.

CANDLEMAS

(2nd Feb.)
Purification. VM

1. Very old feast, specially at Jerusalem.

Our Lady : After the legal forty days' purification, the Jewish mother offered sacrifice of lamb and dove (if poor, two doves).

2. Also a feast of Our Lord (the earliest aspect), His first entrance into the Temple (hence the procession) to be offered to God as the first-born, and then bought back.

3. Candles : like incense, etc., common to Jewish and pagan religions ; natural symbol of joy ; to-day used to signify the " Light of the World."

4. The world's Light is also the world's Redeemer.

Plenty to-day to remind us of Passion. Simeon. Offering of the precious first-born.

5. Last echo of Christmas. After this, Church begins to turn thoughts to Lent and for repentance : our sins, and what they cost the Son of God.

cf. Cardinal Newman :

" The angel lights of Christmas morn
Which shot across the sky,
Away they pass at Candlemas ;
They sparkle and they die."

and the rest.

THE CANDLEMAS BLESSING

"A Light for the revelation of the Gentiles."

Out of these words of Simeon has grown the Candlemas ceremony.

The Church gives you a candle, and her blessing-prayers tell you what the candle signifies.

1. The first prayer asks that the candles may be hallowed "for the use of man, and for the health of their bodies and souls, whether on land or sea."

2. Second prayer, that carrying the candles we may be "inflamed with the fire of thy most sweet love."

3. Third prayer uses symbolism of light: the first thing created by God, who dwells in light inaccessible. It is addressed to Christ: "O Lord Jesus Christ, the true Light," etc., and asks for "the radiance of the Holy Spirit" to discern what is pleasing to God, and so after "the perilous darkness of this life" to attain to the Light never-failing.

Fourth and fifth prayers repeat same idea.

4. During distribution, Nunc dimittis.

5. In the procession, your candle is the Light of the World and you are Mary or Joseph carrying Him into His Temple.

(See first antiphon.)

Candles re-lighted later, at Gospel; and at Consecration, to welcome the Light of the World really present.

BLESSING OF THE ASHES

(FOR QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY)

1. Originally for the public penitents. But we are all sinners, *deserving* public penance, so nowadays the Church invites us all.

2. First prayer : that an angel be sent to bless the ashes ; and that those who are sprinkled may receive " health of body and safeguard of soul."

Bodily health is not to be despised, and is closely connected with soul-health ; on these occasions the Church usually begins by praying for both (cf. Candlemas and Palms, and holy water ; as well as Extreme Unction, etc.).

3. Second prayer : that we wear ashes—

(a) In token of our *lowliness*, i.e. the lowly origin of man's body from slime of the earth ; probably through many lower forms of life, until God fitted it to receive a soul. "Dust thou art."

(b) "To obtain forgiveness," because a sign of *penance*.

(c) To remind us of our *death* : "Doomed for our guilt to return to dust."

4. Third and fourth prayers ask that the ashes may not remain a mere outward ceremony, but may strike inward to our hearts "by the spirit of compunction."

5. All summed up by the words of imposition : *Memento homo*, etc.

LENT A TRAINING-TIME

"Now is the acceptable time."

1. You cannot leave important occasions to the chance of the moment. They must be trained for.

Lent is training for two things :

(a) A good celebration of Easter.

(b) The everlasting Easter.

2. English are inclined to think religion is for those who like it.

But it is for all, because it concerns facts which are common to all—God, the soul, its destiny.

Different types of men take religion in different ways ; but it is for *all*.

3. Lent is when the Church insists on our thinking of these essential facts.

Death, for instance ; certain for all ; all ought to train to manage it properly when it comes.

4. The Four Last Things. *Face* the facts.

"Receive not the grace of God in vain."

OUR LORD ON FASTING

(LENT)

“*When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad.*”—Gospel for Ash Wednesday.

1. Why “hypocrites?” Were they secret sinners? No, but their minds were too much on outward appearances. They were trying to be edifying.

2. Notice, once for all, that Our Lord dislikes this. We should try to please God, not to “edify” anybody.

3. But note also, that He takes fasting for granted. “*When you fast.*”

4. There are other fasts besides from food :

Eyes

Ears

Tongue

Amusements, dancing

Alcohol, tobacco, etc.

5. Giving up, occasionally or for a time, even things that are lawful and that perhaps we could not or should not renounce for ever. Strange graces come from this.

Because it is the Way traced by Our Lord in the Thirty-three Years. *Exinanivit semetipsum.*

FASTING

(FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT)

1. Fasting is a general term, covering all sorts of voluntary suffering. Those who cannot fast from food can fast from other things.

2. Lent is a time when the whole Church is seized with a saintly thirst of suffering ; and does her best to " fill up the measure of the sufferings of Christ."

3. It is as if she passed the hat round for self-denial. Those who keep the Church's law of fasting are the subscribers, the backbone of the fund, the heroes of Lent. But all contributions are gratefully received.

4. Here too the principle of the widow's mite holds. If those who have few pleasures sacrifice all they have !

USE OF SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION

(SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT)

"He was transfigured before them."

1. For a moment Our Lord allows His glory to shine out and flood His three friends with joy.

2. We see why, if we consider the circumstances :
 On final journey to Jerusalem.
 Moses and Elias speak of His death there.
 Immediately afterwards He foretells Passion.
 Same three disciples as in Gethsemane.

So Transfiguration was to strengthen them for the dark days.

3. So with our own "consolations"—the times when we feel happy with God. They are sent by God so that we can look back on them in times of darkness or temptation.

First Communion—some Mission or retreat perhaps—any occasion when we have felt it is "good for us to be here" with Christ.

4. Some fancy such consolations are essential, and think God is displeased with them when consolation is absent.

No, they are simply given to be remembered, so that we may live according to our best times, not at the mercy of our moods.

5. Unfortunately, when Passion came disciples did not look back to Transfiguration. E.g. Peter : boasted, drew sword, fled, denial.

He atoned afterwards, but how much better if he had fixed his thoughts on what he had once seen on Thabor, and so remained steady for Calvary.

We have all had our "vision" : no need to tell it to any man : only be faithful to it.

OUR LORD'S EASTER JOY

(EASTER SUNDAY)

"This is the day which the Lord hath made. Let us be glad and rejoice therein."

1. This joy of the Church is the reflection of Christ's joy. She is the bride of Christ and shares His fortunes.

In Holy Week she sounds all the depths of sorrow.
So now, shares in joy of His resurrection.

2. In the gospels, Christ's own joy is hardly described; the apostles seemed shy almost during the forty days, and their awe has pervaded the gospel narrative.

But the Church knows how He felt. It finds expression in the Liturgy. A pity Catholics don't use the Missal more.

3. Consider Our Lord's joy :

(a) At the end of His sufferings—at having passed the Red Sea of the Passion. ("He showed them His hands and His side.")

(b) At the fulfilment of prophecy (His eagerness to "open the Scriptures" on the way to Emmaus).

(c) At the redemption of mankind accomplished. ("Go ye and teach all nations.")

4. These are some elements of the Easter joy of Christ. We ought to share it.

We cannot, if we are in sin.

5. But if we have made our Easter duties, if we have done and are doing our best, then we have right to Easter joy—to see everything in a beautiful radiance like the soft spring sunshine, because we have found the true secret of life. The Sun of justice, Orient from on high. "In Me is life and the life is the light of men."

EASTER TRIUMPH

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory.”—Luke xxiv, 26.

1. *Si exaltatus fuero* : fulfilled already with good thief, centurion, and now at *Ecce Lignum* on Good Friday.

2. But He would never have “drawn all” except for resurrection.

Other men have died for men ; but this Man draws all because He is God, and we know He is God because He rose from the dead.

3. Hence great joy of Easter : began with Christ and His Mother and apostles ; spread to Church Militant, Suffering, Triumphant ; echoing louder and wider every Easter.

4. In Resurrection, Christ receives permanent glory, which is His by right : permanently transfigured.

He veils it for the disciples, but the difference is there, and they have difficulty in recognising Him.

And yet, too, He is the same : with His five wounds. “We have not a High Priest who is ignorant and cannot have compassion.”

5. But Christ’s Resurrection still in a way incomplete. He is Head of a Body, and that Body too must triumph over death.

He is “First Fruits” ; if we are planted with Him, etc. (Rom. vi, 5.)

6. We do not know what joy our human nature is capable of (like a man who knows trees only in winter) till that final and eternal Easter.

THE RISEN BODY

(WHETHER CHRIST'S, OR OURS LATER)

1. *Real*. Not a mere spiritual resurrection.
2. *The same Body*. (The five wounds.)
Ours same too, only restored to perfection.
3. *Immortal*. No longer subject to death.
4. *Impassible* : no pain.
"Sown in corruption, rise in incorruption."
5. *Glory*, or radiance. (Concealed by Christ.) Differing
in different people.
6. "*Agility*." Moving with speed of thought.
7. "*Subtily*." (Through closed doors.) Complete
dominion of soul, so as to become like a spirit. "Sown
a natural body, shall rise a spiritual body."

OUR EASTER COMMUNION

(EASTER SUNDAY)

"Christ our Pasch is sacrificed. Therefore let us feast not with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

1. Both to Our Lord and to us our Easter communion means more than ordinary communions.

What has it done for us ?
And what has it committed us to ?

2. A communion of *obligation* for all. To-day " My flesh is meat indeed." Easter Communion makes the whole Church " one Bread and one body."

(Still another Sunday left for slackers—lest they amputate themselves from the mystical Body.)

3. " One Body " involves unity and peace. Hence prayer just before Communion : " Domine Jesu Christe qui dixisti . . ." Disunion is dislocation of Christ's Body.

4. Another thing : Easter Communion means Resurrection. We receive His Body as it exists *now*, risen and glorified.

His Resurrection : and ours also, because at the end of the ages His Mystical Body, all scarred and marked with its age-long Passion, will rise too in final Easter. " He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever."

5. So Easter Communion commits us to :

Living as part of Christ, because we are.

Treating others as identical with Christ, because they are.

Thinking of Church as Christ, because she is.

Living a new life, because we have eaten this
" unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

6. What marvellous things are these we believe—"the Catholic Church ; the Communion of Saints ; the forgiveness of sins ; the resurrection of the body ; life everlasting !"

THE ANGELS OF THE RESURRECTION

(FOR EASTER TIME)

1. For a while, on Easter morning, things seem transfigured into a beauty not of this earth. The ground trembles no longer, the guards are fled. We see the new world begun, suddenly and with a great calm—the garden, the fresh flowers of spring, the strong sun just risen, the long level shadows of dawn, the birds flitting from one branch to another in the wonderful light of Easter morning. And, finally, to bring heaven still closer to earth, we can see, in and out of the sepulchre, to and fro amongst the trees, the white-robed angels of God.

While Our Lord is spending the first moments of His risen life with His holy Mother, let us watch His angels at the sepulchre.

2. *Why* do the angels appear ?

(a) Because it is fitting that the King—like every great one—should be announced before He appears Himself, and preceded by His servants: the angels are now at Christ's command.

(b) Out of consideration for His friends, to send them word of His rising from the dead, that His appearing to them may be less startling.

(c) Out of consideration for the angels themselves.

Since Christmas night they have been allowed to minister to Him only in His trials and sorrows—flight to Egypt, Temptation, Gethsemane; at last even that is forbidden, and all through the Passion more than twelve legions of angels stand waiting in their ranks with stern faces and hands on their swords, only to hear Him reject their aid.

But all that is over, and now it is Our Lord's Day, and He is glad to let the angels share His joy and triumph.

3. *To whom* do the angels appear ?

Not to everyone ; not to Peter and John, for instance, when they ran to the sepulchre ; but to Magdalen and the holy women who had been so faithful to Him all through the Passion, from beginning to end, even till now, when they are bringing their sweet spices.

How glad they were, when they had the angels' message, that they had remained true during those terrible hours !

How glad we shall be one day of all the times we have remained steadfast when we had some trial to endure for Christ !

4. Consider the angels' words :

" Be not affrighted," the women are told. All very well for the guards to have been terrified ; even they need not be, if they will come back and acknowledge Our Lord as the Son of God. No need for the holy women to fear. True, something strange and tremendous has happened, but not to be afraid of—only for joy and hope.

To us also : Easter morning is no time for fear, with Easter communion just made ; no fear then about the past, for sins are forgiven ; nor about the future, with the risen Christ to strengthen us.

" You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified." A simple statement, but what greater words of praise could be given to the holy women ?

Could our guardian angel say the same words to us ?

" He is risen "—the wonderful tidings—not dead then—death cannot hold Him—He is alive once more !

St. Luke's version adds, *" Why seek ye the living with the dead ? "*

That Our Lord is alive and acting—all of us need to bear this in mind. Living not only mystically in the Church and sacramentally in the Tabernacle, but (still more important, because the foundation of these) living His own full human life at the right hand of God.

" He is not here ; behold the place where they laid Him." The angels labour to convince the bewildered women, by the evidence of eyesight. Also (as St. Luke tells us) by recalling Our Lord's foretellings of His Passion and Resurrection : Remember how He spoke unto you. (Luke xxiv, 6.)

The Church has always used the Resurrection as a *fact* to argue from, a piece of *evidence* ; and we see this way of speaking goes back to Easter-day itself, even to the angels at the sepulchre.

“ *There you shall see Him, as He told you.*” For Our Lord keeps His promises. So to us, about heaven : He has gone before us into heaven, to prepare a place for us ; *there* you shall see Him, as He told you.

SHORTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE

(THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER)

“ *Again a little while and you shall see me.*”

1. He explains the saying to the apostles ; their trials of this mortal life, in Church militant, would be only for little while, and then turned into joy.

He meant this for us too.

2. The shortness of human life—how quickly the seasons come round—how soon over !

Pagan view : Like a bird flying out of dark, through a lighted banquet-hall, out into dark again.

Christian view: through a short “vale of tears ”up to the illimitable sunlit mountains of God.

3. Two good ways of taking life’s shortness :
As sobering ; fleeting pleasures end in death.

As encouraging ; trials endurable because short (thus Our Lord to-day).

4. A matter of right *proportion*. If someone left you a fortune on condition of undergoing hardships for three months.

5. Our difficulties, sufferings, temptations especially—only for a little while—and then full reward from Our Lord Himself.

THE REASONS FOR THE ASCENSION

I. To the last moment Our Lord is *teaching* us.

There was no *necessity* for Him to ascend upwards into the air. The sky (as we know now) is not a solid firmament—heaven is everywhere—Our Lord could have merely vanished from before them, or said farewell and walked away over the hills.

But the Ascension was a dramatic way of teaching them and us :

That His visible sojourn on earth is ended.

That He is nevertheless still Man.

That He is exalted by God.

That He will come again.

II. So St. Thomas (whose way it is to search for reasons, even in the sublimest mysteries) says the Ascension was done for three reasons in regard to us :

(a) To make our *faith* grow (according to John xvi, 10, and cf. John xx, 29).

(b) To make our *hope* grow (according to John xiv, 2 and 3).

(c) To make our *love* grow (according to Matt. vi, 21, Coloss. iii, 1 ; and John xvi, 7, the Holy Spirit being divine love).

So our part is to fix our thoughts and hearts on Christ at the right hand of God, and be ready for His coming at every moment.

DEVOTION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

"Veni Sancte Spiritus reple tuorum corda fidelium."

1. Devotion to Holy Spirit too rare. It is perhaps the richest grace of all, the final fruit of the Catholic life.

2. A conspicuous devotion of Christ Himself, and of the apostolic age.

3. Some characteristics of it :

Ardent desire : the word that holds it all is "Veni !"

A sort of holy opportunism—ready to wait and ready to take opportunities.

Confidence in God's inspirations when they come.

An absence of worry or fussiness.

A settled disposition of not blaming people—praying for them instead.

Courage, and spirit of apostolate, as on day of Pentecost.

A liberation of spirit, leaving aside trivialities and unworthy notions about God.

4. No words so beautiful as those in which Church elaborates her "Veni." If we use them often (e.g. as thanksgiving after Communion) devotion to the Holy Ghost will soon grow in us.

THE SEVEN GIFTS

(PENTECOST)

Four of them concern Intellect, three concern Will.

1. *Intellect*. God has given us the Faith, and a *mind* to use on it.

Think about the Faith ; it is a big thing, inexhaustible.

Know more and more about it : not merely what a plenary indulgence is, or the difference between sanctifying and actual grace ; but how the Faith fits in with life.

e.g. original sin *explains* so much.

or Purgatory : what *common sense*.

Use your knowledge. In reading, note where the journalist goes wrong. In conversation, learn to state the Faith without argument.

2. *Will*. Intellectual gifts no use without sincerity of life. Hence we need also :

“Fortitude” : to stick it.

“Piety” : treating God as our Father.

“Fear of the Lord” : treating God as Creator.

THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CHURCH

(FOR WHIT SUNDAY)

" Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum."

To-day the Church's birthday. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and has been in the Church ever since.

His work :

1. Infallibility : protecting the Church from error in her definitions of the Faith.
2. A constant guiding of her routine teaching process, even where not infallible.
3. Helping the Church's rulers in government.
4. Constant inspiration in the devotional life of the Church ; whether steady or continual (as in growth of liturgy) or special movements (as in spread of devotion to Sacred Heart, or frequent communion to-day).
5. Raising up the great saints when needed.
6. Producing vocations.
7. Conversions, Foreign Missions, etc.

Then, too, all His hidden work in individual souls, inside the Church and out of it.

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THE HOLY GHOST IN THE SOUL

I. Some ways in which He works :

Enlightenment of mind, in flashes : "lucis tuæ radium."

Steady illumination of judgment : "lumen cordium."

Strength to persevere : "Consolator optime" :
"Paraclitus."

Creative impulse, a joy in *making* something: "Creator Spiritus." "Et creabuntur."

Warm glow of charity in heart : "ignem sui amoris."

II. And this last is the most important, for absolutely everyone.

The Holy Ghost is the substantial Love of Father and Son. (Teque utriusque Spiritus) : all other love comes from Him.

There is never enough *real* love in the world. "Fove quod est frigidum."

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

(CORPUS CHRISTI)

"I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for ever. And my tabernacle shall be with them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people." Ezechiel xxxvii, 26-27.

I. The Real Presence—a favour unimaginable if we did not know it.

"Is it credible then that God should dwell with men on the earth? If heaven and the heaven of heavens do not contain Thee, how much less this house?" (Solomon consecrating the Temple, II Par. vi, 18.)

Yet we know it is so. Therefore make full use of it.

"To this end only it is made, that Thou mayest regard the prayer of Thy servant and his supplication, O Lord my God . . . whosoever shall pray in this place hear Thou from Thy dwelling place."

Hence, visits, to Blessed Sacrament.

II. The four great kinds of prayer, and ends of the Mass: Adoration, thanks, repentance, petition.

Say also, four kinds of visits:

1. Visits of *Adoration*.

Acts of faith in divinity of Jesus Christ, and in His Real Presence here.

Forgetting ourselves in God.

Losing ourselves in contemplation of God's majesty here brought down to us.

2. Visits of *Thanks*.

Letting ourselves go in gratitude.

Love God for being God.

Love Him for everything He has done:

(a) To mankind.

(b) To me.

• (c) Especially for the plan of the Real Presence.

3. Visits of *Repentance*.

Looking at Our Lord to see what He expects of us and then at ourselves to see what we are.

4. Visits of *Petition*.

A businesslike talk with our most real Friend about things we want done. But

(a) Begin by emptying out self-regarding motives.

(b) Put spiritual petitions before temporal ones.

III. "Now therefore your king is here, whom you have chosen and desired." I Kings xii, 13.

A King all-powerful and always accessible.

"LIFE AND FOOD OF OUR SOULS"

(CORPUS CHRISTI)

1. Why does the soul need food? Because it lives, and works, and grows.

Lives = a spirit-life, like God and angels.

Works = does soul-work, giving bodily life to our body and making it higher than animals.

Grows = not in size, but in experience. It is being educated for God by this mortal life.

2. All sorts of food for the soul, not all good; every experience we have. Conversation, reading, contemplation of beauties of nature.

Also Christian doctrine and Holy Scripture.

3. But chiefly Eucharist, because that is Christ Himself, source of all grace.

Life = *state* of grace.

Food = *actual* graces constantly coming (as result of our Communion). *Light* and *strength* are the food our soul wants. Light that we are conscious of, strength that we are unconscious of until we need to use it.

4. Thank God for all our past Communion, and make resolve to be more alive to Blessed Sacrament in future.

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

(FOR THE FEAST)

"You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold and silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ."—I Peter i, 19.

1. The object of this devotion : the actual blood of Jesus Christ, received from Mary, shed in the Passion, resumed at the Resurrection, still flowing in His veins and pulsating through His Sacred Heart, and offered in the chalice at Mass.

2. It is the means of our salvation ; and therefore the apostles are never tired of speaking of it.

St. Peter, in text : "precious blood" = the blood of price, the blood that has purchasing power. A slave could purchase his freedom by counting out a certain number of "gold and silver" coins ; but we were redeemed with Christ's blood—every drop surpassing all the world's treasures—and not *counted* out, but *poured* out.

St. Paul, e.g. Col. i, 20, "Reconciling us by the blood of his cross." Heb. ix, 14, "By his *own* blood." And I Cor. vi, 20, "You are bought with a great price !"

St. John, too : Apoc. v, 9, the new canticle in heaven : "Thou hast redeemed us to God in thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and nation."

And Apoc. i, 5, "Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

And I John, i, 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

3. Blood stands for *life* (hence poured out in animal sacrifices, to show God is Lord of life).

The Precious Blood is a River of Life flowing from

Calvary. Like that vision of water (in Ezechiel xlvii, 1-9, and *Vidi Aquam*) flowing from the right side of the temple eastwards into the desert and bringing life everywhere.

We may follow a broad river up—ships, towns, villages, rocky torrent—to the first tiny trickle high up some lonely mountain: so we trace the mighty river of Grace to the wound in Christ's side.

4. So the spirit of this devotion is one of joy and gratitude: "Redemisti nos Deo in sanguine tuo."

5. But remember "precious" may mean "costly"; and our redemption *was* costly for Christ. We sing grateful rejoicing hymns about the Passion, but He "trod the wine-press alone," in shame and agony.

6. At Mass the Precious Blood is once more mystically poured out; then is the time to be glad He has bought us "with a great price"; and to renew our intention of belonging to Him for ever.

THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST

(LAST SUNDAY OF OCTOBER)

At the Last Supper Our Lord "gave thanks," hence Mass is called "Eucharist"; and at the beginning of Canon, in the Preface, the Church "gives thanks" to God for the Incarnation. The great feasts and seasons have specially-worded Prefaces, each seizing on some special aspect of Christ's work to thank God for.

In the Preface for to-day's feast the Church has found words of supreme beauty and majesty:

"It is truly meet and just, right and available, that we should always and everywhere give thanks, Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Eternal God: Who with the oil of

gladness hast anointed Thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as Priest for ever and King of all things ; so that He should celebrate the sacred mysteries of human redemption, offering Himself on the altar of the Cross, a spotless and peace-making Victim ; and that He should bring all creation under His empire, and render up to Thy endless Majesty an eternal and universal Kingdom : a Kingdom of Truth and of Life ; a Kingdom of Holiness and of Grace ; a Kingdom of Justice, of Love and of Peace. And therefore, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominations, and all the array of the army of heaven, we sing a hymn to Thy glory, saying without end : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory ; hosanna in the highest."

1. "*With the oil of gladness*" : i.e. by that union of the divine nature with the human, which lifted Christ's human nature to the joys of the Godhead. The Incarnation is the source of Christ's office and power. Only a God-man can be equal to the position of Priest of Mankind, and King of all Creation.

2. "*Priest for ever and King of all things*" : uniting the two offices, like the Priest-King Melchisedech.

3. "*Celebrate the sacred mysteries of human redemption*" : Our Lord goes to the Cross like a priest going to say Mass.

4. "*A spotless and peace-making Victim*" : a worthy Victim, being God as well as man. "In him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell ; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of his Cross." (Colos. i, 19-20.)

5. "*Bring all creation under His empire*" : This happens at Resurrection and Ascension. "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth."

At the Second Coming this power will be fully exercised and triumphant ; "according to the operation whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself."

6. Then, finally, He will “*render up to Thy infinite Majesty an eternal and universal Kingdom.*” These words echo some mysterious words of St. Paul: “When all things shall be subdued unto him, then the Son also shall be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (I Cor. xv, 28.)

7. “*An eternal and universal kingdom*”: i.e. the life of heaven, for which we are made, where God’s will is to be done perfectly.

8. But even now this Kingdom is being built up in Our Lord’s Church: a Kingdom of *Truth* (revealed by God), of *Life* (where God lives in His creatures by *Holiness* and *Grace*); a Kingdom of *Justice and Love and Peace*, where men’s relations with each other are regulated by their relations with God.

9. That procession of great words describes the Catholic Church as it ought to be; and the qualities of every soul that owns the rule of Christ.

Truth: Holiness: Justice: Love: Peace—these are the *realities*, which will last for ever.

Are we taking them seriously? Are we willing to have this Man to reign over us?

10. In the special act of consecration of the Human Race recited this evening we pray for the conversion of all heretics, unbelievers, pagans, Islam, Jews; but first and most urgently we remind our King that “we ourselves are Thine, and Thine we wish to be,” and so consecrate ourselves afresh to Him and to His service. Do it with your whole heart.

THE KINGDOMS OF CHRIST

(LAST SUNDAY OF OCTOBER)

"Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ."—Apoc. xii, 10.

1. In Our Lord's way of speaking, the "Kingdom of God" = the Reign of God : God reigning, not merely in heaven, but also on earth in the hearts of men.

2. Or, we can say, the *Son* of God reigning ; since Christ Himself is God and has come to set up God's Kingdom ; and "He must reign" until at the end the time comes to deliver up the Kingdom to God and the Father (I Cor. xv, 24.)

3. Different devotions, different sayings of Our Lord come uppermost in the Church's mind in different ages. In this age it seems likely that she will think more than ever of Christ as King. So the great new feast established by Pius XI.

4. Christ is King in various ways :

(a) King of Israel. The Great King looked for by God's chosen people.

So Gabriel at Annunciation : "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father ; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

(b) King of the Nations—the Gentiles too—all the nations of the earth. So Simeon in the *Nunc Dimittis*. And so often in prophecy : "Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thy inheritance and the ends of the earth for thy possession."

This is fulfilled :

First, in the Church Catholic, through which Our Lord reigns in all the ends of the earth. Secondly, over all the nations as such, in so far as they draw together in peace and goodwill : for only He can effect this.

- (c) King also of the Angels and all Creation : for God has given Him the "Name above all names," etc. cf. Phil. ii, 10, Coloss. (i, 16, Hebrews i, 4-9.

5. All this because of the "hypostatic union" : He is the God-Man, Creator as well as created ; therefore He reigns by right over all that is not God. "To which of the angels hath he said at any time : Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?"

6. In all these ways His Kingdom is complete, or else will be complete in His own time.

Yet His great desire is to be King in your heart and mine *now* : this is what *we* have to remember, for it depends on *us*.

7. He desires so to reign in us that we shall
Never commit mortal sin ;
Nor commit deliberate venial sin ;
Nor refuse God anything He really asks of us.

8. That is, He must reign unchallenged: nothing in our heart to rival Him when it comes to a test ; "no man can serve two masters," as He says in to-day's Gospel.

9. If only that could be ! The only thing worth having : what Christ calls the "pearl of great price," for which all the rest of the world's treasures can profitably be thrown away. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God."

ALL SAINTS

(ON THE GOSPEL : MATT. V, 1-12)

1. Christ is the preacher to-day. No need to explain. Only question is, Do you believe Him (so different from ordinary advice), and are you going to act on it ?

2. e.g. Blessed are the poor (in spirit).
“Money is power.” We are none of us rich here, thank God ; but are you glad not to be ?

3. Or the meek ; who hold in their anger ; don't believe in force and shouting and bullying.

4. Or they that mourn. *Is* it better to open your heart to the sorrows of men ? It isn't comfortable to be hungry and thirsty, even after justice.

5. Do you believe Christ ? There are ways of getting out of it : “That is for saints, for monks and nuns.”

6. No, this is for all. Church gives the gospel for *All* Saints.

These are the things Christ is preaching, every day—not only in gospel, but still more at Elevation, and in Tabernacle all day.

ALL SAINTS' DAY

"Our conversation is in heaven."

1. The Feast that will be eternal, because all the Church will one day be Triumphant. The attainment of the End of Humanity : Joy with God.

2. Being built up now ; every year more saints. No housing problem : many mansions. Christ died for all.

3. A day of pure joy in heaven for Christ, Mary, Joseph and all the great Family.

4. We belong already, though not all the privileges. Still in the nursery.

But nothing can prevent us save our own fault.

5. Joy (as an end of life) is all right.

Pleasure (as an end of life) is all wrong.

Absurd to risk eternal joy for a moment's pleasure.

FOR THE HOLY SOULS

"Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei."

1. When anyone needs our help, and we can, it is shocking not to ; e.g. in cases of drowning ; or the priest and Levite in parable.

2. So with the dead. We really can help them.

Spiritualists are bent on getting help from the dead ; but how much more practical and consoling is the Church ! Perhaps the souls can help us too ; but certainly we can help them, and it is callous not to.

3. "Manus Domini tetigit me." The "Manus Domini" is the Holiness of God. The soul realises the difference between itself and God—hence a suffering that purifies.

4. In a way we need not pity them—rather pity ourselves.

But they need our practical pity. God has so arranged it ; doubtless for our good, too, for every time we pray for them we are practising unselfishness by thinking of others.

5. Remember, too, the living need prayers as much as the dead. We needn't wait till people are dead before we help them.

The Church is a vast society of people who help each other on to God.

Don't be merely one who is helped, do your share of helping.

L.—ON VARIOUS SUNDAY EPISTLES

THE DIVINE CHILD

(SUNDAY IN OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS)

“As long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.”—Gal. iv.

1. Here is God's only Son and Heir, in the Crib. He differeth nothing from us, God's creatures and servants, to all appearance.

No rays of glory, no royal robes even. An ordinary baby.

2. Yet “lord of all.” Because Creator. All that is—stars, mountain-ranges, human race, angelic world—He made it.

3. Growing up, at Nazareth, He will still be under Mary and Joseph—sweet “tutors and governors” indeed—until “the time appointed by the Father.”

And even then, when He will come forth to Capharnaum or Jerusalem clothed with His Father's power, He will still keep outwardly the “form of a servant”: still no rays of glory, no royal robes: nothing outwardly to distinguish Him from us except His holiness and His greater capacity for suffering. And finally a bitter slave's-death.

4. Yet “lord of all.” And all this that He might make us servants to be sons and “heirs also” with Him.

REASONABLE SERVICE

:(FIRST AFTER EPIPHANY)

“*Your reasonable service.*”—Rom. xii, 1.

1. Not in the sense of moderate, worldly, compromising (as people often mean when they say “Be reasonable!”).

2. But according to right reason. God first, “with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul,” etc.

i.e. a conscious service, knowing what we are about.

3. Not “reasonable,” if we serve God because of routine or convention ; or because of terror ; or because of transitory pleasant feelings.

4. St. Paul means those who *see for themselves* that Christ and His Faith = only sure guide of life, and arrange lives accordingly.

5. For many, biggest duty is upbringing of children. Train them to “reasonable service.” When very little, you can rely on example, suggestion, compulsion. But don’t rely too long. As soon as possible see that they know what they are about, and widen their opportunities of deliberate choice.

This applies also to religious duties. Children of practising Catholics *never* give up religion, except when “reasonable service” has been left uncultivated.

SOLIDARITY IN CHRIST

(SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY)

"Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep." —
Rom. xii.

1. For the Sundays after Epiphany we have St. Paul giving practical advice. Christmas and Epiphany = Christ shown to Gentiles: so Apostle of Gentiles comes to show how Christians should live.

2. To-day he is at his great principle—all one body in Christ, different members.

Beginning with "he that giveth, with simplicity," he gets on to the one spirit that should animate all members. The family unity that Christ prayed for.

3. In a body, what affects one organ or member affects all.

In a family too.

So in the Church, if really one: joy and sorrow (everything) shared.

4. This certainly was spirit of early Church.

e.g. the communism-experiment at Jerusalem: and the subsequent collections for Jerusalem.

5. It came from the Sacred Heart. Christ did literally rejoice and weep with others. Lazarus. Cana. Compassion on the multitude. Let Himself be carried away by the needs of others.

6. This is what He wants us to learn at Mass.

Why do you think He gets us all to Mass on Sundays? So that we can see each other (not in false lights) but in the True Light that came into the world at the first Christmas.

LOVING AND GIVING

(SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY)

"Of one mind one towards another."

1. St. Paul's idea of the Church : many members held together by a Love (the love of Christ for them, and their love for each other) and each giving what he can to the whole.

2. Hence those have not got hold of the real thing who come to Church for what they can get—

(a) in temporal welfare.

(b) or even spiritually, for their own souls.

3. The Church is not only for getting, but for *giving* :

(a) Church at large : each nation. Some, like France or Ireland, give more.

(b) A congregation : some give more : prayers, help, money.

(c) So with a Christian family too.

4. St. Paul says something of both love and giving.

"Let love be without dissimulation, etc." Charity real, without hypocrisy. This Christian love is not called love in some borrowed sense : it is the real thing, warm and human.

"He that giveth with simplicity." Not looking for return, or quid pro quo : give it simply because you have it to give, and giving is best.

5. Like God, whose nature it is to give.

GOOD OVERCOMING EVIL

(THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY)

“ *Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.*”

Overcoming evil by good—the permanent method of Christ and Church.

1. Evil in *ourselves*: lack of conformity of our will with God's.

e.g. bad thoughts of all kinds : overcome them by good thoughts.

e.g. habits, so important. *Replace* bad habits by good ones.

2. Evil in *others*.

Overcome it by :

(a) Good opinion of them, or at least, understanding.

(b) Or at worst, forgiveness. (“ Father forgive them.”)

(c) Praying for them.

(d) Good example (as in epistle). The point about good example is that the *spirit* of it is caught.

PATIENCE

(FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

1. "Humility, modesty, patience" = essentially Christian virtues. "Discite a me."

Not Jewish or Pagan.

2. Patience = restraint of anger, intolerance, etc.

3. Two regions of its exercise.

(a) Things (weather, illness, etc.).

Can't be cured, must be endured.

Battle between you and circumstances : if you lose patience, you've lost.

Pagans understood this.

(b) People (Pagans had little idea of this : no "putting yourself in his place").

Much higher kind, because this not only perfects you, but also wins others.

4. Job's misfortunes : first things, and then people (his "comforters"). God intervenes and takes his side.

5. St. Paul talks about patience as if it were the easiest thing in the world ! So it is if we remember who we belong to.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE FAITH

(SEPTUAGESIMA)

"Not as at an uncertainty."

1. One of the most glorious things about our holy religion—the certainty of it!

2. In most things in life not much certainty. Science : business ; friendships. You feel your way along : any time ground may give way under your feet.

So with religion, for non-Catholics.

3. But for us—on a rock. Christ came to give us certainty. *The Truth.*

4. The Apostles realised this :

"Thou art the Christ . . ."

"Lord, to whom shall we go?"

"We have seen his glory . . ."

5. And that certainty of the Apostles He made permanent on earth by His Church.

6. Rejoice in this certainty, when you sing Credo, or say Divine Praises.

GOD OMNIPOTENT

(SEXAGESIMA)

"Power is made perfect in infirmity."

Here St. Paul gives us one of his own constant thoughts of God—a way of picturing God. We may picture God in many ways :

1. e.g., as infinite Being (if we have a rather philosophical mind) Who gives existence to all else, and is existence Himself : the ultimate Reservoir of Being.

Vast still ocean, no shores, no ocean-bed ; we the bubbles on its surface.

2. Again, as infinite Wisdom : we can think of God as a Mind.

Our own mind, knowing, understanding : then some genius ; some archangel : suddenly strip all limits away : God !

Of course it is not true to think of God as a Mind, in the same sense as our mind : but it is true enough, and it helps us to trust His wisdom and His unsearchable plans.

3. Or as infinite Goodness and Love. Never to be lost sight of : we must add this to *everything* we say of God, else we shall get astray at once.

4. But here St. Paul pictures God as infinite Power, that nothing can stop. Think of—

A great storm, rendering man and his works helpless.
Growth, vegetation slowly lifting great rocks.

An irresistible army, waiting to cross the frontier.

So the Power of God : and gets its chance in our weakness. It is for us to give the word.

MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

(QUINQUAGESIMA)

"Now I know in part : but then I shall know even as I am known."—I Cor. xiii, 12.

Three ways or stages of it :

1. By *natural reason* alone, we are capable of knowing God's existence, and His chief attributes. (Wisd. xiii, and Rom. i, 20.)

But daily cares, or clouding passions, render this unlikely in most cases.

2. By *faith*, in God's revelation about Himself, men can know the foregoing truths with greater ease and certainty; and also many truths quite beyond reach of natural reason.

Faith, in comparison with natural reason, is like powerful headlights compared to a dim lantern.

3. With faith comes grace, which leads us to *the Beatific Vision*, by which at last the mind gazes directly on the Infinite Reality unveiled.

4. *Natural reason*, like a blind man feeling his way.

Faith, like a man still blind but discerning and following a light.

Beatific vision, like a blind man receiving gift of sight in full sunlight.

"Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God ; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him ; because we shall see Him as He is." (I John iii, 2.)

TRUE CHARITY

(QUINQUAGESIMA)

"Seeketh not her own."

1. St. Paul is only enlarging on Christ's own words about the characteristic mark of Christians.

"By this shall all men know . . ."

"Thou shalt love . . . this do and thou shalt live."

"All things whatsoever you would that man should do to you, do you also to them ; for this is the law and the prophets."

"If any man will come after me . . ."

2. It might be called "unselfishness."

Not merely a habit of doing "unselfish things" : this may be done unwisely, like a mother who is always waiting on her children.

Genuine unselfishness is rather a state of mind : St. Paul is trying to describe it to-day : "seeketh not her own."

3. Other words for it. "Sympathy," feeling with people, trying to understand them. "Imagination," putting yourself in others' place (much cruelty is mere lack of imagination, as in small boys with animals).

4. The point is, that such a permanent mood or attitude is impossible if our thoughts all circle round self.

5. This disinterested love, this combined love of God and our neighbour is the Christian secret ; a quite special state of mind.

If you think you have some touch of it, by God's grace, do all you can to develop it. It can easily die out as life goes on. Or if encouraged it can become the overmastering passion which St. Paul hymns.

ST. PAUL ON LOVE

(THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT)

Epistle. Eph. v, 1-9.

1. "*Followers of God, as most dear children*"—as children take after their parents. (The likeness ought to increase as the children grow.)

2. "*Walk in love.*" i.e. *live* in love.

God gave you eyes to see with, brain to think with, a heart to love with ; *use* it.

Love God, and your neighbour.

Everything is to be treated in accordance with its nature : flowers need sun and water, human beings need love.

3. "As Christ also hath loved us" ; in His life ; on Calvary ; in the Mass.

4. "*All uncleanness, and covetousness.*" Coupled thus, because the essential evil of impurity is the self-seeking in it : the greatest force in our nature may get *mixed* with self, and so become "unclean."

5. "*As becometh saints*" : those who have received the new life which can dominate lower elements.

6. "*But rather giving-of-thanks*"—i.e. Eucharist !

In other words : "No need for you to be like the pagans around you. They know no better. But you have the truth ; and you have Christ in the Mass to show you what real love is, and to give you strength for it."

THE TREE OF LIFE

(SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER)

"Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree."—
I Peter, ii.

1. i.e. the wood of the Cross.

Word "tree" appropriate. A tree is *living* wood, and the Cross is indeed the Tree of Life.

2. Two trees in Adam's paradise. "Tree of Life" is mentioned, but remains unexplained and mysterious.

This is the explanation. This rough pinewood cross fashioned by the military-carpenter. (Legend says the wood was descended from the original Tree of Life.)

3. As in the story of Genesis, Eve took from Tree of Knowledge the cause of Misery and Death, so Mary received into her arms from the Tree of Life the Cause of all Happiness and Life.

4. Every Lent and Easter the Tree is green again, and the Blessed Fruit that hangs from its branches is God's gift for the life of the world.

"Take ye all and eat : this is My Body, delivered for you."

5. Don't rest content with having made Easter duties : try a more frequent Communion than before.

THE ATONEMENT

(SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER)

"Christ suffered for us."—I Peter ii.

1. Passion in Paschal-time ! Yes, it is always in season. "Christ our *Pasch* is *sacrificed*." Like the disciples during the forty days, we must often think of that Red Sea through which Christ has had to come.

2. "Bore our sins." The doctrine : God made us for grace and beatific Vision ; original sin placed a gulf between these gifts and us, and our own actual sins rose piled on this side of the gulf like a mountain range. How was God's will to prevail over our evil will ? How could we be saved back to Him ? Might have been many ways ; but God's choice was the death of His Son, offered in sacrifice for us. "Christ our *Pasch* is *sacrificed*."

3. Another Jewish type-feast (Feast of Atonement) ; the scapegoats. (Cath. Encyc. II, 54) "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He "bore our sins in His body upon the tree."

4. In another way, too, the Cross redeems us : by its influence on mankind ever since. All sins bring misery, but not always to the sinner ; often to innocent (e.g. drunken father, or a grasping millionaire). Very often the spectacle of innocent suffering startles sinners into repentance—they see what they've done. So the Cross has been slowly educating mankind : they look on Him who they pierced ; they know it was human selfishness and stupidity that crucified Christ, and that He would be crucified again by to-day's Pilates and Herods and Caiphas and mob. So each of us looks and learns the cost of our sins.

ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD

(SECOND AFTER EASTER)

"You are now converted to the Shepherd and bishop of your souls."

1. To-day's shepherd-comparison brings out our *need* of Christ—of being *with* Him.

The one disaster for the sheep is to wander away from the shepherd. He is infinitely wiser than they are.

2. Our Lord often stresses it in St. John's Gospel. The Vine. "No fruit unless you abide in Me." (John xv, 4.)

"You are with Me from the beginning," and must stay with Me.

3. Christ is not simply a teacher, to learn from and leave. Must *stay* with Him, live by His life ; always learning something new, always renewing strength from Him.

4. Hence Eucharist. At Mass we *feel* ourselves one flock and the need of staying united if we are to work for Him.

5. Hence also loyalty to Holy See. Good Shepherd told Peter to feed His sheep.

Never right to cut yourself off from Church (e.g. marriage outside Church, or quarrel with priest). Only one Shepherd, and we must stay with Him.

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

(THIRD AFTER EASTER)

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims."—I Peter ii, 11

1. He means Christians are not at home in this world

(only passing through) having been made citizens of the Kingdom of God.

cf. St. Paul : " Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and the domestics of God."

2. Like strangers in a foreign land, Catholics and their ways seem queer to those around them. (Latin, Confession, Friday abstinence.) People never know quite what a Catholic will do next !

3. Well, there *is* a distinctively Catholic view of life ; that we are only *journeying* through this life, and the next life is far more important.

4. Contrasted is the spirit of much Socialism, which puts all its hope in improving this life—like building a magnificent staircase up to nowhere !

And also the spirit of the " idle rich," who have made themselves at home in this world, as if they meant to live here for ever.

5. But Catholics know what life is for, and what happens at the end ; they hear about self-denials ; they have confession for sincerity and Communion for strength. If they lead selfish useless lives, it will be no excuse to say they only did the same as those around them. " But you had the Faith !" Our Lord will say.

6. A great thing to be a Catholic, and treat life as a journey. Sensible travellers travel light.

Do what we can to make it a comfortable journey for fellow-passengers ; but, after all, only a journey.

Nothing matters enough to fret over. Even bereavements and separations—soon we shall reach the terminus, and they will all be there. Only like being in different carriages on same train.

7. So live, not as if this world were everything, but as travelling through it, to our real home.

THE USE OF GOD'S GIFTS

(FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER)

"Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above."

1. Previous context shows that St. James here is combating the idea that "spirit is good, matter evil."

No : *every* gift is from above, and is good,
God made *all* things, and called them "very good."
He made them all for man, and man for Himself.

2. Hence "right use of creatures" (meaning not only world of external nature, but also our own nature, powers, temperament ; and other people, etc.).

Right way of "using" : to help us towards God.

3. e.g., reading. Is a great help towards God, but needs to be *managed* rightly. Time given to it, books chosen, etc.

4. So doing, everything in our life becomes an occasion of proving our love for God.

5. Like a modern Money-King : he arranges all his personal habits, and presses *everything* into service, to assist him on his way to wealth and power.

St. Francis of Assisi did likewise, in pursuit of poverty and in God's service. He loved all the gifts of God, but used them only for the Giver. He set his heart on God, and found it thereby enlarged so that it could hold all the world.

DOERS OF THE WORD

(FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER)

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."—James i, 22.

1. If Christians of apostolic time, with their strict lives, needed this warning, much more we.

2. "Religion is the opium of the people"—no, but an individual may *use* religion like a drug—fulfilling all "religious duties" on Sundays, and spending the week in bullying his family, oppressing his workpeople, or neglecting his tenants.

Such "hypocrisy" not so easy for a Catholic, because of Confession, but still possible. There are Catholics who "deceive their own selves."

3. "Well, St. James can't mean me. I am regular at the sacraments, give alms, pay my debts and tell the truth. When I go to confession I can hardly think of anything to say."

Perhaps St. James does mean you. A Christian can never be *self-satisfied*.

The "word" we must "hear and do" is the Incarnate Word. Jesus Christ is the "mirror" into which we must look, and not forget what manner of man we are compared with Him.

4. "All that's rather vague: let's have something more practical—what exactly do you mean by a *doer* of the word?"

St. James heard you saying it, and drops a few hints. e.g. "Not bridling his tongue" may touch some.

And then a programme of "religion clean and undefiled":

(a) Seeing and serving God's image in others: this self-forgetting charity is the essential thing.

(b) Keeping unspotted from this world, for only so can the other thing be achieved.

THE NECESSITY OF LOVING

(SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."

1. Love, then = life. The "more abundant life" which Our Lord came to give. "By this shall all men know."

2. "Passed from death to life." A change or discovery. Love, goodwill, sympathy = the necessary atmosphere. Just as fish lives in water, animals in air, so human beings live fully only in atmosphere of love.

3. Therefore you must deal with men accordingly. Handle coals with tongs, bees with gloves and mask, men with love and goodwill.

4. Love is the necessary atmosphere; but intelligence also necessary; e.g. labour troubles can't be solved *only* by goodwill; still, it's a needed preliminary.

5. Same with domestic family. Intelligence needed, to settle differences, make plans. Things arising all the time. But if goodwill prevails, all one mind, then there's the right atmosphere.

6. Christ's secret = the only practicable way of dealing with human beings is love.

As Christianity lives on, there should be less and less need to make big guns and build prisons.

We have "passed from death to life," and we know it because we find ourselves loving our brethren.

NOVUS HOMO

(SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"We also may walk in newness of life."

1. A New Life.

cf. Christ's words to Nicodemus : "born over again."

2. In time of Apostles, with their adult converts, the new life began with baptism.

3. For us, baptism and sacraments do their work, but often we don't let it flower out.

4. Old life = occupied with self. Trivial, on guard, touchy, un-content.

5. New Life : all that swept away—taken out of oneself —"alive unto God."

6. As much difference between these as between chronic illness and perfect health. "A different person."

7. How does new life show itself? In simple ways (see St. Paul's admonitions in any epistle), but the point is, it is *there*.8. It is in all of us, only wants *using*. Offer yourself to God : "Reckon you are dead to sin, alive unto God in Christ Jesus," and act accordingly.

HEAVEN

(SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"The End—Life Everlasting."

1. Here we are, with the rest of our lives in front of us. One day (all the world ended) not one of us alive with this mortal life.

What sort of life, then? Put it at its best, all of us saved.

2. None of the disadvantages of present life : illness, worries, struggle for existence.

3. All the good points of this life continued and perfected—i.e. all worth keeping. We shall not *lose* anything by death.

Capacity for enjoying enlarged. Even in natural life of soul and body we shall be much more alive than now.

4. Special joys of heaven : society of Christ and Mary and saints. And the thing that will make all the difference, the one great event that will be always happening in that life, the thing that will make it a life of supreme joy unimaginable, will be the Beatific Vision of God.

5. That is "life everlasting." And we've already begun that life. State of grace.

Like birds in the egg : no suspicion of the wonderful existence God means for us. "Eye hath not seen." But it is *begun*—"The grace of God—life everlasting."

6. Still, we *can* refuse it, like a little skylark who preferred to stay in his egg and died. Birds saved by instinct : we have free will and can misuse it.

"I must take most care of my soul."

THE ADOPTION OF SONS
(EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"You have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba, Father."

1. One of the words used for supernatural life.
2. Human adoption—a stranger brought into family—no difference is made—shares in everything.
3. So we, into God's family. "Heirs also," to the Beatific Vision. All our graces come from adoption.
4. Especially prayer (Abba, Father = the Pater noster). Without constraint: not afraid to bother Him. Children run to show their father everything, ask his information, guidance. Ask for what they want with complete trust: the attitude Christ means.
5. Our adoption is because of Christ. Rom. viii, 29. "First-born amongst many brethren."
6. *Baptism* does this for us. "Regeneration" = a new birth, into God's family.
"Receive this white garment." Baptismal innocence not mere absence of sin, but an interior beauty of soul beyond imagination; hence be careful never to lose the state of grace.
Make sure God comes first. Not for any sorrow or happiness separate from Christ.

LOVE AND WORK

(FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"While we have time, let us work good to all men."

1. Christianity = good work. St. Paul wouldn't have thought much of merely "saving one's soul"; you can't, by yourself.

Not passive, but active: there's so much to be done, because God's world is not as He would like it to be.

2. That is why Christ came. The Kingdom of Heaven = not heaven, but the rule of God on earth. Our Lord wants all the help he can get. Every man or woman or child who says Thy Kingdom come, and sets about it in Christ's way, brings it nearer—"I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do."

3. "Christ's way?"—what is that? Love for God and our neighbour. God gave us a *heart* (like He gave us eyes to see with) to love with, and we must use it. Most people forget how to use it; but Our Lord said over and over again that the world would be a different place, and the Kingdom established, if only everyone would use their heart right; love God and the things God loves, and keep hearts open, instead of closed-up to fellow-travellers in life.

4. "While we have time." Life is short: little enough we can do, anyway, for Christ: He asks for our help *now*. "When I've made my fortune." "I'll begin weekly communion next year." In friendship prompt response to appeal is everything (e.g. to nurse a sick friend). Treat Christ worse?

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

(FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the spirit."

1. The Spirit = the Holy Ghost. The Sanctifier, sent to us by Christ, to make all things new in us.

2. We "live in the Spirit." That life is in us, of which Christ said such wonderful things. (John xiv, 16-19.) However poor our spiritual life may be, it has a footing in us, and all the power of God is behind it for us to draw on. Nothing is impossible. If we remain what we are, it is for want of realising.

3. Two things to realise then :

(a) That we *live* in the Spirit, and have power to walk.

(b) What it *is* to walk in Spirit.

4. Walking in Spirit = the twelve fruits (last Sunday) : each one of the words falls like a lovely music : Charity, joy, etc.

5. Christian character hard to describe, but easy to recognise. In many good Catholics, in nuns often, in Protestants who give themselves to charity. Not a matter of temperament, because you meet all *kinds* of people who have it. A calmness and peace, evidently right at centre of soul. You can count on them listening to you, and being reasonable at any time ; not tossed about by their moods. They have control of themselves. They don't believe in complaining and criticising and arguing—they know it has to be done, but they leave it to others. They are humble, not thinking of themselves. They're not thinking of their rights ; nor their duties—they do duties as a matter of course. They *are* thinking how they can be useful to people, how they can serve. They are thinking of that all the time, just as you and I might be thinking of looking after our own interests. Above all they are clever at understanding how people feel and putting themselves

in their place. And the reason they're clever at that is because they have it in mind all the time.

6. That sort of character ought to be the fruit of the Spirit. If we know *what* we should be, and know that we have the *power* to become that, it won't take long. When a baby realises he *can* walk, how surprised and proud he is ! And how fast he gets on ! Realise that we *can* walk in the Spirit.

“O guide our minds,” etc.

THE CHARITY OF CHRIST

(SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

“*That being rooted and founded in charity you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth.*”—Eph. iii.

1. The need is a love fixed and unchangeable—a *root* and *foundation*.

From that, we shall begin to *know*.

2. St Paul's words suggest a long process made up of little things.

Divine love analogous with human love. Novels end with marriage, but that is the beginning really : come back in ten years' time ; if it is a *rooted* love it has survived and grown into knowledge. Love feeds on little things—incidents, words, actions.

3. So divine love too. Our first turning to God is only the beginning of the story. In ten years' time ?

Charity feeds on little prayers, sacrifices, generosity—
or else dies for want of them.

4. Reward will come. Grow to a knowledge of the “breadth and length,” etc., of God's love.

Our Lord will not be outdone in generosity.

“To know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all understanding.”

CATHOLIC LIFE

(SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"To him who is able to do all things more abundantly than we desire or understand, according to the power that worketh in us : to him be glory in the Church."

1. These words remind us to thank God for His work in *this* corner of His Vineyard.

Also they help us to understand what a church or a congregation *is*.

2. "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them."

A promise. True of *any* assembly—e.g. a Catholic family.

Still more true of Catholics gathered at Mass—Christ is in the midst, drawing them all together into one family.

3. That is how Catholic Church is made : not of individuals, but of these big families called parishes. Each held together by the Mass, "the power that worketh in us." Each a distinct workshop of Christ (like Carpenter's shop at Nazareth).

4. So thank God for past blessings, and ask that in future, too, there may be always "glory to Him in the Church"—this church.

And that this congregation may be always "rooted and founded in *charity*."

5. Again : "When any two of you shall agree on what to ask, it shall be done for you by my Father." This can give us confidence about all our parochial plans, so long as they are genuinely for God's glory.

GOD TRANSCENDENT AND IMMANENT

(SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in us all."—Eph. iv.

Three truths (and three mysteries) about the Eternal God :

1. *"Above all"* (Mystery of God's inner Being).

Transcendent, unknowable except by analogy. Infinite gulf between God and highest archangel.

2. *"Through all"* (Mystery of Creation).

Creating = causing something to be without any previous material to work on.

Under anything, at its roots, is God's Will creating and sustaining it.

Creatures are not God, yet He is close to their inmost being—is it.

3. *"In us all"* (Mystery of freewill).

In *us*, free beings : God conserves us and *enables* us in every act ; even in sin His physical concurrence is required.

"In us all" again, and more astoundingly, by Grace. Thus lifting us up to His own God-life.

PERSEVERANCE

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

“Who also will confirm you unto the end.”

1. Importance of perseverance; for all the good beginning is wasted without it.

The man whose heart fails him, who loses interest—“is it worth while?” So in spiritual life—you’ll never do anything without perseverance; not even keep in state of grace.

2. Secret of perseverance: keep the memory of your beginning. Go back to it when discouraged. Discount your present moods (like a man in a dark room goes forward after his match is burnt out).

3. Another help: don’t look too far ahead. You can persevere through to-day.

4. Help other people. You can help them to persevere. What all people want is encouragement.

You’ll find it helps your own perseverance too.

WATCHFULNESS OVER THOUGHTS

(NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

“Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”

1. Everyday Perseverance, not only in grace, but in work, and in the Christian way of living, means living up to our best times.

2. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Words and actions = the overflow of thoughts. Important that thoughts we make *our own* should be right kind.

3. So choose what things you think; let them be encouraging ones (though not self-deception).

4. Don't *give* yourself to the sort of thoughts that come from indigestion, or when lying awake in the small hours.

Think of *encouraging* things. Above all think of Christ, in all His aspects.

5. Our Lord on “sufficient for the day,” etc.

“This illness year after year? This temptation always? Can I endure any more?”

Look ahead for encouragement, but not for discouragement. Get through one day. Live from one communion to another.

6. And do remember to encourage others. They may need it badly. You'll never know how much good you do, till heaven perhaps!!

JOY

(TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"Partakers of my joy."

A favourite idea of St. Paul: "Gaudete in Domino semper." Hence he was in such high spirits even in prison.

1. Joy is what we are all after (not pleasure as such). Because we are made by God for joy.

2. Life ought to be a joyous thing, but there is no real joy to be got out of life apart from God. History and experience show it. Make happiness depend on created things, and they fail us.

3. There is one human soul which possesses "perfect joy": Christ's. Because united with divinity. Joy of Christ's humanity same as other men in kind = love of God and God's creatures.

4. John xvii, 13. "My joy." Only by union with Christ can we get perfect joy.

5. Church = Christ, and is therefore natural home of joy. Joylessness and harshness in religion certainly not from Christ. (Sorrow, yes; e.g. Stations, but there is joy there.)

But there's an attitude of mind which murders joy, is suspicious and jealous of it. No echo in Christ of this.

WHAT LOVING GOD MEANS

(TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"Approve the better things."

1. St. Paul wants to see them perfect. For that, even "charity" is not enough; it must "more and more abound in *knowledge* and *understanding*." We ought to *approve* the better things. Not only keep the commandments, but love them too. Have a *taste* for things of God.

2. Not always easy. We can control our actions, but not always our tastes, our likes and dislikes, our understanding or not understanding. Sometimes we have to do what is right out of mere duty, not seeing why it is *right*.

3. But not be content with mere duty. There's always a *reason* for God's commands, and we should try to understand and "approve."

4. St. Paul is strong on this, because he hadn't always approved the better things himself. He *had* always acted from duty, but he had approved the wrong things—persecuted Christians, etc. Then he suddenly saw that *Christ* was the Truth, and spent the rest of his life learning the mind of Christ—learning to approve the right things.

5. We have always known Christ. But if we love Him (and we do—that is our one hopeful feature), *because* we love Him, we should try to have the same tastes; to love the things He loves—kindness, justice, sincerity, purity and lowliness of mind. *Approve* all these better things.

6. And, too, love the people He loves. Our Lady: the poor: the children: sinners: our neighbours. Not only to love them because He loves them (that to begin with), but to see in them what He sees. He sees something to love in all; and so should we if we had learned to "approve the better things" and knew how to look for them in others.

TWO WOMEN

(TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"I beg of Evodia and I beseech Syntyche to be of one mind in the Lord."

1. Poor St. Paul—has to turn aside from the high mysteries of faith to settle the quarrel of these two ladies.

(Yet it shows importance of charity and unity. St. Paul, who thought in continents, knew his work would be weakened at its source by disunity. He was building on the love of Christ.

Where love of Christ reigns no room for meanness or self-importance.)

2. I wonder what it was all about, hundreds of years ago. Perhaps Syntyche said something about Evodia, and some friend carried it round; and perhaps Evodia was one of those sensitive people. It must have been serious, else St. Paul . . . but if we knew, it would seem trivial now.

3. Whose fault? Paul doesn't say. If they had been men . . . but as it is he only begs for Christ's sake.

4. How did it end? Did they have enough humility and common sense to put things right? Hope so. Perhaps Evodia came and said, "Let's begin all over again."

Perhaps became great friends. Or gradually.

5. Or perhaps St. Paul's effort only made matters worse. Perhaps they both wrote long letters to him—perhaps they stopped coming to Mass. Perhaps both in purgatory still. Even in hell?

6. We'll hope they made it up. I'm sure they did.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

(TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST)

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness."

1. Some animals are made (physically) for darkness, but not men. Light is necessary. Even *artificial* light cures certain diseases.

2. Kinds of darkness :

(a) Absence of sun : as night or underground. Without lamp you bump against things ! (So absence of Christ ; e.g. pagans, *sitting* in darkness and shadow of death.)

(b) Fog. Sun shining but hidden.
So the passions of bad Catholics.

(c) Blindness.
So spiritual lack of vision. Worst of all.

3. "I am the Light of the World."
Sol Justitiae—Monstrance.
Paschal Candle.

4. The terror of darkness (e.g. children) is of not knowing where you are, and what is there with you.

Christ's light shows us where we are : on the little bridge of this life, between the nothingness before creation and the eternal happiness for which God made us.

True proportion : the few short years of this life—use them so that we can for ever look back on them with gladness.

5. That is the difference Christ's coming has made. So many people live and think as if He had never come. Once more resolve to be of the few who remember and make it not wasted, and help Him with the work.

M.—ON THE SACRED HEART

THE SACRED HEART

1. It is a Divine Heart.

(a) Because united to the Godhead, and therefore worthy of highest adoration.

(b) A revelation of God's eternal love for us.

2. But it is also a human Heart, like ours. ...

And every chord of feeling in us (sin excepted) has its answer in the Heart of Christ.

3. So He understands us *all*. How rare are men of universal sympathies, and what a power they have!

4. So whatever our character and special difficulties are we can take them to Him.

5. Spiritual writers tell us not to lean on human sympathies. They mean we must not *depend* on them. Go first to Christ, and find out what is "the length and breadth and height and depth" of His love.

OUR HOME IN THE SACRED HEART

1. A special marvel in this devotion: Our Lord revealed it Himself, not in the thirty-three years, but nowadays—like a sort of divine afterthought—as if He had not done enough!

2. Our *Home*. We each have our own place in Christ's heart: e.g. during agony in garden. So too now: to each of us He would say what He said to St. Margaret Mary.

3. He invites us to claim our place there. This is the secret of the Christian life—to live in Sacred Heart.

4. The only sure *Refuge* and shelter. When things get a bit too much for you, go in there and rest.

5. The *Treasury* of God. All we can possibly need is there, as much as we can carry. Unfortunately we can't carry much at a time. So go often: make a habit of it. "What do I need most? Here it is."

THE SACRED HEART AS PEACEMAKER

"Heart of Jesus, our Peace and our Reconciliation."

1. First, our Reconciliation with God, by the Redemption. A frightful thought, that mankind *needed* reconciliation with God—was separated from Creator!

Suppose the sun died out suddenly—in a few minutes

black darkness, overwhelming cold, the oceans frozen solid, all life become impossible.

So supernaturally, with the Fall. But only for one appalling instant, and then the Peace and Reconciliation of the Sacred Heart already began to make itself active. Immediately after Fall the Redeemer is promised and grace is at work.

2. Secondly, our Reconciliation with one another.

(a) *Nations*. How frail is the balance of peace, easily upset by little things, any day. War is a constant menace till the Heart of Jesus rules. (cf. the great statue of Christ, made of old cannon, erected on the Andes as memorial of arbitration-treaty settling boundary between Chile and Argentine. (*Catholic Encyc.* i, 705.)

(b) *Individuals*. Any may have quarrels and misunderstandings, but if both love our Lord estrangement cannot be *kept up*. You cannot feel easy in His presence so long as you are not on speaking terms with another friend of His.

3. Never to have quarrelled with one's friend is good ; and never to have sinned against God.

Yet also there is a special beauty in reconciliation. Love may become more tender and grateful, deeper and more understanding, not *because* of the quarrel, but because of overcoming it. Forgiving, like giving, draws people closer.

4. So with us and God. O felix culpa.

We seem to understand more of God, and have more reason for gratitude, through the Sacred Heart of Jesus our Peace and Reconciliation, than if He had come to an unfallen world.

THE SACRED HEART, OUR HOPE IN DEATH

"Heart of Jesus, Hope of those who die in Thee."

1. Worldly people say of Catholicism: "A good religion to die in."

Always was so: the sacraments—Penance, Viaticum, Exterme Unction.

But more than ever since spread of devotion to Sacred Heart. *Confidence* in God. How many million deaths sweetened by pictures of Sacred Heart—by long-familiar ejaculations—by remembrance of the promises to St. Margaret Mary.

2. We ought to think often of our death.

Not to terrify ourselves with it (easy enough to terrify people about death, because on this subject all mankind—and even animals—have a strong instinct-fear of death; which should be mastered and managed, like other instincts). But to get used to the thought of it, as a practical fact of the future: to "place ourselves in the dispositions in which we desire to be found at the hour of our death."

3. So picture yourself dying:

Of illness—in your own bedroom, lying worn out, every breath hard work—friends come in and out, watch you and speak quietly to each other—you look at them wistfully, far too exhausted to open your lips or even make any sign—you know this is the end for you—everything slipping away, sight and hearing dimming—you must go, in a few minutes now—friends cannot follow you—you must go *alone*! Who can be with you there? Only One—Heart of Jesus, once in agony, have pity on the dying!

Or an accident: you are enjoying yourself, talking, laughing—swiftly, without warning, it happens—in thirty seconds you know you are dying.

4. Sooner or later, one way or another, the moment of your death will come.

Then if you have loved and served Christ our Lord, often made acts of perfect contrition, often entered through that wound in His side to His Sacred Heart, in that extremity your thoughts will turn naturally and strongly to Him.

Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in Thee, salvation of all who trust in Thee : have mercy on us !

THE SACRED HEART, OUR SANCTIFICATION

" Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received."

1. This fullness is Grace.

What *is* Grace in itself? Here is mystery, rich and obscure.

It is a " gift " freely bestowed " for our sanctification "—to make us *holy*. Using this clue, say that Grace is the Holiness of God communicated to man.

2. *Holiness* in men—not easy to define, but we recognise it when we see it. Something positive, not merely absence of sin. Perhaps we have known two or three *holy* people in our life—they seemed set apart somehow, lifted above ordinary life, separated—something in them went far up out of our sight.

Holiness in God, then, is His own most inward life ; that which makes Him *separate* from everything not God, belongs to Him *alone*, incommunicable.

3. And yet communicated, by the greatest of all miracles. Jesus Christ, God-man, brings it to us—the rushing mountain-stream of grace rising in that most secret recess of God's life ; flowing in its fullness in Christ, and overflowing from Him to us.

4. The stream-metaphor is Our Lord's own. "Living water" (John iv, 10). "He that shall drink of this water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever; but the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting."

Physically, water is a more primary need of living things even than food. Life began (biologists tell us) at the water-edge, and it cannot exist without water. In cities water is taken for granted, and men never really thirst; but those who have really thirsted (in deserts, etc.) know that a little clear water is worth more than all the gold and silver in the world. In real thirst the whole body is crying out for what is a matter of life and death to it.

5. So our soul, thirsting after the Holiness of God; and the answer is the Living Water of Grace brimming over in the Sacred Heart. Hence—

"Heart of Jesus, Fountain of Life and Holiness.

Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received."

And in the Mass:

"You shall draw waters with joy from the Saviour's fountains."

6. Rejoice in our complete dependence on Christ (if we have any grace now, if we find ourselves one day in the Joy and Holiness of God, it is *all* due to Him).

And also determine to receive more and more from His fullness—come again and again to the Well of Life—Frequent Communion. "All you that thirst, come to the waters!" (Is. lv, 1.)

WHAT THE SACRED HEART SHOWS

1. It shows the redemptive love of Christ as *man* ; but it also tells us of the love of *God*.

2. This devotion has made great difference to men's thoughts of God ; it was *meant* to.

Less fear ; more faith.

Less fear ; more hope.

Less fear ; more love.

3. Unwise mothers say : " Just you wait till your father comes home." The normal father doesn't like to see his children shrink from him in terror.

4. God was tired of being made into a Threat and a bugbear, so He sent His Son once more into the world; not to become man and die for us (He had done that once for all), but to convince us that He meant it. Casting out fear.

5. " Making religion too easy," they say. How little they know !

Love makes the doing of hard things sweet, that is all. It is *fear* that reduces religion to a few easy things ; and it is *only* love that does the hard things.

FORNAX ARDENS CARITATIS

1. Heart = love ; the flames = love's ardour.
"Ignem veni mittere"—i.e. God's love for men, and men's love for God and neighbour.

2. Love is strongest force in human nature, and therefore in the world.

Before Christ, power of love not understood. Bad men appealed to fear, good men to reason ; love was wasted and mismanaged.

3. Our Lord showed us

- (a) Power of love ; the kind that stops at nothing.
When St. John said "God is love" he was only summing up life of Christ.
- (b) Extent of love, which of its very nature widens continually. We love God and find we must love all God loves ; widen our hearts to hold all men.

4. Black Country at night—a countryside dotted with flickering furnace-flames. Suddenly a furnace is opened—a vast red glow in sky and everywhere. "Reminds you of hell" some say. No, rather of a fallen world bathed in the redeeming Precious Blood and lighted up by the warm glow of the love of the Sacred Heart.

N.—ON OUR BLESSED LADY

OUR LADY IN ADVENT

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God. For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation ; and with the robe of justice he hath covered me, as a bride adorned with her jewels."—Isaias, lxi, 10.

1. Devotion to B.V.M. always in season. Christmas, hidden life ; Lent and Good Friday, Risen life and Pentecost and Corpus Christi. (Litany during Benediction !) Never separable.

2. But in Advent especially. We see how necessary she is. We can't have Jesus without Mary. "Pervia coeli porta." It's for Mary to show unto us Our Blessed Saviour.

3. Also because we can see the necessity of her graces. She is become in this intimate way the Tabernacle of the Most High God. Costly graces, till her beauty drew God to earth—"For the heaven He left He found heaven in thee."

4. Every other mother (expectant) can ask Our Lady to get her the graces needed, so that her own child may be nearer to God through having a good mother.

5. Hence Church in Advent : prayer de B.V.M. in Mass daily. And to-day (fourth Sunday) Ave Maria, as if she's never said the words before.

GOD'S JOY IN MARY

(IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, DECEMBER 8th)

"Thou art all fair, my beloved."—Cant. iv.

We often think of B.V.M. from our own viewpoint. Let us try to get God's.

1. One thing only is real : the Glory of God.

"Infinite in all perfections" : all created perfections, as a drop in the Atlantic, are in God—and all one there, like sunlight unbroken by prism.

So God's Life is one of infinite Joy, in Himself, all-sufficient to Himself.

2. Yet God takes joy in B.V.M. In her predestination, privileges, office, coronation.

3. Why does God rejoice in Mary ?

(a) Because He sees Himself reflected in her. "Mirror of Justice."

(b) Because all in her is His gift. "Full of *grace*."

(c) Because through her He is able to love His creation more.

There is something in God that seeks to go outside Himself. He has to create objects for His love, and they are not a complete success ; but Mary is. She gives a new glory to the rest of Creation.

4. So not only "Cause of our joy," but cause even of God's joy !

APPARITION OF LOURDES

(FEBRUARY 11TH)

“*Nunc ergo filii, audite me.*”—Prov. viii, 32.

1. This feast is unusual ; a seal of the Church on a “private revelation.”

2. 1858, Bernadette’s eighteen visions.

“Young and lovely woman,” “lovelier than I have ever seen.” “I am the Immaculate Conception.” “Tell the priests to build a chapel for pilgrimages.” (Four years before bishop agreed.)

3. Over a million pilgrims every year.

There have been over 4,000 cures.

But the spiritual cures, too : going to Lourdes for a week is something like it might be to go to heaven for a week.

4. Lessons : God uses the lowly. (If He did something here it would be the same.)

Also, that nothing will convince the world : seeing Lourdes, we can understand how even Christ failed.

Those who love Jesus and Mary must make up for those who ignore them.

THE VISITATION

(JULY 2ND)

1. A mystery of Rosary : what do we think of ?
2. First, St. John Baptist. As Christ came to John later, Mary comes to Elizabeth now. The two mothers spend three holy months, and so (says Ambrose) St. John is anointed for his mission.
3. So, saying second joyful mystery, put ourselves in place of Elizabeth and thank God for all these wonders.
4. Or consider B.V.M.'s helpfulness. We are told so little about her, but all we do know suggests someone very practical and active ; never tired . . . and especially thoughtful for others. She would be like this always.
5. Or another side to B.V.M. is shown by the Magnificat: the spring of life inwardly which made her what she was to others.
Still under influence of joy of Annunciation : and Elizabeth's salutation makes it break forth.
If we turn over its words in our mind during Rosary they will sink deep and give us that peace which the world cannot give.

THE ASSUMPTION

(AUGUST 15TH)

"Who is she who cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array."—Cant. vi.

1. Assumption = the bodily taking up into heaven of B.V.M. after death.

Not defined, but would be if denied.

Ancient tradition of the Church.

2. Reasons for the Assumption :

1. Her dignity as Mother of God : Word made flesh from her.

2. Associated with Him in life and redemption, so too in resurrection.

3. Her complete freedom from sin ; so death should not hold her.

4. Her sanctity, immeasurably higher than any other creature.

5. A more homely reason : the love of Jesus Christ for His mother : He wanted her with Him.

3. So follow her in imagination, escorted by singing angels (all happy to recognise an earthly woman as their Queen)—Gabriel—the angels of Bethlehem—angels of the Passion and Resurrection—Gates open—glory of God streaming out—souls of the just, King David, Joachim, St. Anne, Joseph, St. Elizabeth, The Wise Men, Holy Innocents—

And finally as Our Lady comes near, Jesus Christ comes out to embrace His Mother, and to lead her into the unimaginable happiness and glory of the Blessed Vision of God. Reunited, Jesus and Mary. Jesus our God and our Redeemer. Mary our Queen and Mother, our life, our sweetness and our hope.

MARY'S CHOICE

(FOR THE ASSUMPTION : GOSPEL OF THE FEAST)

1. Surely not the least of Magdalen's glories that she is here taken as a type of Our Lady ; as if the Church could find no higher words to say of Mary Immaculate than these spoken to Mary Magdalen, "*optimam partem elegit Maria.*"

2. The story leaves many good people feeling unsatisfied and sympathising with Martha. Christ seems so reckless of "practical" matters. Yet if everybody acted like Mary !

3. But remember (1) Everybody won't ; (2) Martha also is honoured as a saint. (3) She was not asked to do same as Mary ; perhaps for her it wouldn't have been right. Rebuked, not for working, but for losing temper. She had a real grievance, or rather hardship, but it was just one of those little things that. . . In short, she is rebuked for being "solicitous" (Gospel for fourteenth after Pentecost) ; putting these things *first*.

4. It is not that Christ is reckless of "practical" matters, but reckless of them when they collide with higher things. *Unum necessarium*. God's claims on any soul come first ; and from some He claims more than from others.

5. Make sure of God first, and all these things can be managed safely.

Example : Our Lady. Contemplative as a Carmelite, active as Martha.

6. She is in heaven

(a) for God's sake or glory,

(b) for Christ's sake,

(c) for her own sake.

(d) for ours, by her example and intercession.

Ask her to help us make sure of the *unum necessarium*,

NATIVITY OF OUR LADY

(SEPTEMBER 8TH)

"All generations shall call me blessed."

1. All good children remember their mother's birthday. So Catholics: we became her children on Calvary; and ever since she has taken her responsibility seriously. Not one of those careless mothers. . . .

2. e.g. after Ascension: encouraging apostles, and praying. So too now, she follows closely the fortunes of the Church.

3. And of individual souls too, where Christ's cause is won or lost. She can see them all in the Beatific Vision.

4. So we have good reason to celebrate her birthday, by Mass and Communion if possible, or Benediction.

5. And a present? Sometimes hard to decide birthday presents, but Our Lady's is easy. Only one way to please her.

We heap titles on her, sing hymns and light candles, but it only pleases her in so far as it brings us nearer to her Son.

The *only* present is to love her Son better, be more keen in His service, more anxious to know His will, and more ready to spread the news about Him amongst people who don't know.

THE MEANING OF MARY'S BIRTHDAY

(SEPTEMBER 8TH)

"Happy art thou, O holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise, because from Thee arose the Sun of Justice, Christ our God."—From the Proper of the Feast.

1. Birthdays in the family should be remembered.

Usually the happier and more united the family, the more is made of birthdays : the children's as they come round, the father's, above all the mother's.

So in the family of the Church : great joy for Mother Mary's birthday ; everyone must remember it !

2. Why is Mary's coming into the world so great a joy ? Because *it brings Christ's coming so near*. God is waiting to enter His world, but His Mother must come first. This tiny child in St. Anne's arms is the one before whom the great Archangel will kneel to give his message.

3. Mary's birth is (practically) the end of the Old Testament, the beginning of the New.

The long night of the world's waiting ended at last.

Mary's birth is the dawn-light, spreading beautifully up the sky before the Sun rises. At last Creation begins to look beautiful in this new light.

4. She is indeed all beauty : the first perfect human creature since Eve and Adam fell.

There is nothing but joy in her birth, for she is *full of grace even now*, and has been from the first moment of her conception.

5. *In heaven* Our Lord will wish her many happy returns—a whole eternity of them. All the Court of Heaven will join with Him in the celebration. Nothing will please Him more than that we should make it a great day.

6. We can celebrate it—

by *Mass and Communion* that day, and a special visit to her shrine :

by *doing some kind action* or service to others in her honour :

by choosing *one of her virtues* to cultivate specially during her Octave.

THE SECOND EVE

(FOR NATIVITY B.V.M., SEPTEMBER 8TH)

"He that shall find me shall find Life."—Prov. viii, 35.

1. Our Lady's Birthday ; every reason to be glad and rejoice with Church ; proud of her. She is the only creature of mankind who is perfect as God meant us all to be. The only unstained. Only image of God unblurred.

2. Following St. Paul (on Christ and Adam) the Fathers like to compare Mary with Eve.

Second Eve. First Mother and Second Mother. Disobedience—obedience. Disaster—salvation.

3. She did all that, not by any notable doings, but simply by being the worthy Mother of God—the link.

4. Isn't it strange that Protestantism tried to do without Our Lady ? Who could imagine the second Adam without the second Eve ? Who could want to separate Jesus from Mary, who gave Him to us ?

5. They did, but many of them have found out their mistake. So much the better. If they love Mary, they understand Christ better ; and the better they understand Christ, the nearer to the one fold of Christ. Coming to see that Christ involves taking notice of Mary ; soon perhaps taking notice of Peter.

6. So congratulate Mary our Queen, and remind her once more that England is her dowry, and ask her to make everyone of her birthdays a milestone of progress.

DEVOTION TO MARY

Wisdom vii, 28 and 29 ; viii, 1, 3 and 4

Recall some of the solid reasons for giving honour to Mary.

1. First because she is worthy of receiving it. Eminent men, saints ; above all these, Mary has done *most* for us, and is nearest to God.

Short of latria—adoration (which is a different thing in *kind*) we cannot give too much honour to Mary.

2. Because of the spiritual advantages. Mary's power. Think of some of the saints and their powers—Mary's are greater, because of her nearness to God.

Saints and Popes have said that *all* God's graces come through Mary.

3. Practical imitation of course ; but now we speak of just devotional practices. *Due* to the Ideal Creature. And to the all-understanding Mother.

4. Rosary—Angelus—May devotions. Sure to please her Son.

“ Yea, and the Lord of all things hath loved her.”

THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

"A great sign appeared in heaven : a Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."—Apoc. xiii, 1.

1. The "coronation" of B.V.M. means : she is raised to a higher degree of glory than any of the angels and saints.

"Glory" means the Vision. "Full of grace," therefore full of glory.

2. The Vision is infinite, and even Our Lady cannot see tall. But she sees more and deeper than any other creature. Incarnation. Trinity. Immense Joy of God.

3. Her accidental glories.

(a) Radiance and beauty of the Blessed, special in the Queen.

(b) The Beati have each their special crown, but Mary has them all :

Queen of Angels

Patriarchs

Prophets

Apostles

Martyrs

Confessors

Virgins

All Saints.

All these queenships add to her happiness.

(c) And of course the unique glory of being the Mother of God. That is the thought that gives her a special joy all through eternity ; and we can join in it too for her sake, when we say, "Holy Mary Mother of God."

MARY SHOWING FORTH GOD'S GREATNESS

(FOR A SODALITY CEREMONY)

"*My soul doth magnify the Lord.*"—Luke i, 46

"*Blessed art thou by thy God in every tabernacle of Jacob: for in every nation which shall bear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified by occasion of thee.*"—Judith, xiii, 31.

1. So much to be said of B.V.M., hard to choose ; but to-day think of how she magnifies God *to us*—not only praises Him herself by her very existence—but shows us God's greatness.

She is like a telescope, bringing God *nearer*.

Or like a bright light : gazing at her our eyes become more able to bear the brightness of God.

2. Mary shows us the greatness of God in four ways especially :

(i) Because she is so great and beautiful herself : the topmost peak of Creation (except for the Sacred Humanity, and even that is bound up with her). All God's works show forth His greatness : *coeli enarrant gloriam Dei*—much more the wondrous perfections of Mary, planned from eternity.

(ii) Because, since she came into existence, she has had so much to do with God, more than all other creatures : living with Him, acting in co-operation with Him. As we may catch some likeness to an intimate friend, so Mary has caught more of God's likeness and attributes, and shows them forth to us.

(iii) Because her whole story illustrates God's wonderful ways : her predestination, Immaculate Conception, Gabriel's embassy, her unimaginably lofty graces. If it were not for Mary, we should

not know the full goodness and generosity of God.

- (iv) Because of her uniquely high place now in heaven. Queen of angels and men, raised high above all creatures ; yet even she kneels in adoration before the Three in One. Her being so high brings us all nearer to God, and yet makes us see better the infinite gulf between Creator and all creatures.

3. Rest awhile in that happy thought : Mary reigning at this moment in heaven, so fair, so exalted ; so dear to God, and angels and saints ; and her heart pierced through and through with happiness. In all that, she has room for one little extra joy this evening because of our own little ceremony—consecration of new members of the sodality which takes her name and imitates her virtues.

4. There is one more thing. As Our blessed Lady lifts her eyes from our little chapel and fixes them again on the vision of God, she is able to see there the future, even what depends on the freewill of man. Mirrored there in God, she can see every detail of the manner in which these promises made and renewed this evening will be kept in the years to come ; and in the same way with regard to all of us here she can see whether and in what way we shall be faithful to our calling as Catholics, and how we shall persevere in grace and whether we shall get to heaven in the end. What Our Lady sees there of the future depends on us, on our freewill, and our response to grace and our actions now. So let us make up our minds very humbly but very firmly that whatever she sees mirrored there shall be something that will only *add* to those unspeakable joys which fill her mighty soul now with glory as in her days on earth it was full of grace.

OUR LADY, EXEMPLAR OF PRACTICAL CHARITY

"I am the mother of fair love, and of fear and of knowledge and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue."—Eccles. xxiv, 24-25.

1. Using these words about B.V.M., the Church wishes to indicate her as Example of *all* virtues.

God's preparation of His Mother did not end with her Immaculate Conception, and her fullness of sanctifying grace ; He went on to adorn her soul (as men adorn every corner of some great church) with all the virtues. (A virtue is a power and readiness to act in a certain way).

So whatever virtue we need, we shall find it exemplified in Mary.

2. Yet some of her virtues seem specially brought out in the little told of her in Gospels : as if God wanted us to learn *these* above all.

e.g., her altogether lovely humility, willingness to be nobody.

3. Or, her charity. But the great virtue of charity is a whole continent in itself, and Mary's charity is a whole empire. Let us to-night take one little province or corner of it—*her readiness to be useful in practical matters*.

4. Sympathy is a precious and valuable part of charity ; too rare ; but even rarer is the sympathy which takes practical effect as by instinct.

Three pictures :

(a) Amid the joy of the Annunciation, what Mary sees as most urgent is that she can be useful to her cousin ;
" rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste."

(b) " They have no wine." Quietly practical, not

knowing what He would do, but sure He would do something. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."

(c) At the Cross, amid blood, groans, cursing—soldiers holding back the rabble; scribes and priests shouting insults, she was *there*, as close as she could get to the middle Cross—the one practical thing she *could* do.

5. There are people who do not express themselves by words—you must get to know them gradually through their actions.

So with Mary : her words so few (except for the inspired Magnificat) and her actions so swift and direct.

There are a thousand things we may learn from Mary ; but to-night just this one thing—a sympathy that *acts*, silently and promptly, when it finds the need.

MARY OUR QUEEN

"Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy."

1. She is Queen of heaven. All the millions of angels are glad to own this child of earth as Queen. All the apostles and martyrs and doctors. *Astitit regina a dextris Tuis.*

2. Queen of her Son's Kingdom on earth. She is honoured by the whole Church and by all generations. *Gloriosa dicta sunt de te.*

3. Queen of Purgatory ; at home in that atmosphere of holy suffering. These souls, so near to Jesus, are specially dear to her ; and so many of them are her own clients.

4. And what of Hell ? She has nothing to do with hell. There are none of her clients there. Besides she is mother of Mercy.

She spends all her time trying to keep souls *out* of hell. So does Jesus Christ. So does the Eternal God Himself.

5. Yet there remains the mystery of freewill, which is capable of resisting for ever Infinite Love itself.

But in this life Mary is the Queen of sinners, as of all mankind ; and at the " hour of our death " she prays hard that her Son's blood be not shed in vain for us : as she prayed for the good thief.

MARY MEETING JESUS ON THE WAY TO CALVARY

1. In the Stations of the Cross Mary is mostly in the background. But in three of them Mary and Jesus are together in the front of the picture. Let us meditate on the fourth Station.

2. Narrow winding street in Jerusalem—people waiting about—Mary and John (she has not seen her Son since before the last Supper). Procession comes in sight—Roman soldiers clearing a way through the crowd—the two thieves—four more executioners ; the third cross carried by two men. But everybody (and Mary) is looking at the man beneath the front of the cross, the man who is going to be crucified on it if they can get Him as far as Calvary. Pitiable sight—thorns—blood on face and garments—can hardly put one foot before the other—Son of God ; and Son of Mary.

3. John gets her to the front, and for one moment Jesus and Mary look into each other's eyes ; perhaps clasp hands. Then she is pushed aside, and has to follow as best she can.

4. Surely the saddest meeting ever was. Her mother's love would have brought her there in any case, but she was there by God's decree to help in the work of Redemption. She is the "Co-Redeemer" ; not strictly, but we may call her so because :

- (a) She shared His sorrows so completely.
- (b) Her own sorrows are a treasury of merits for the Church.
- (c) As He offered Himself to His Father, so she offered Him ; and surely He was hers to offer !

5. At the Offertory in a High Mass the Deacon also offers the Chalice with the priest. Mary was the deacon at the Sacrifice of the Cross, and so she joined the procession to the altar,

6. Terrible thing to be the Mother of God. Yet we may recall another meeting of these Two, on Easter morning. Pray for grace to understand that there must be *great* sorrow and *great* joys for every one who lives close to Christ our Lord.

MARY AND THE WILL OF GOD

“Ecce ancilla Domini,” etc.

1. These words the key to her character, the secret of her holiness. They mean complete submission to God's will. At the angel's offer which means such glory for her, she doesn't think of herself, only of God's will. She asks one question, to find out exactly what God's will is, and then “*Ecce ancilla.*”

2. All her life God's will had been her only thought ; so when this great moment came she was ready.

3. Holiness is a matter of the will, not of the feelings ; it means that our will must be united to the will of God, so that we have no self-will left.

4. That means first of all, keeping the commandments ; and the counsels too, as far as we are called. But especially it means taking whatever happens as being the Will of God, and making the best of it.

Then you are ready for everything ; whatever God does is right. Success or failure, sickness or health—all the same. You do your best, and leave the rest to God.

5. That does away with the greatest evil after sin—worry. “May the most holy, the most just, and the most lovable Will of God be done, praised, and exalted above all for ever.”

FOR A SODALITY CEREMONY

1. We have many friends and choose them for ourselves ; but God gives us our one Mother.

2. So with our favourite saints, and Mary ; whom Christ gave to us on the Cross, and she can never forget it. She is for all.

3. So devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is *necessary* for all. No limit to the graces of it.

4. But some may go further and put themselves specially under her protection. That too the Church blesses, as to-night the C. of M.

5. So be glad with them, and pray that this consecration may bring them rich graces ; and pray for ourselves that we may give pleasure to our Mother, in this life and the next.

O.—ON THE SAINTS

ST. ANTONY OF EGYPT

(JANUARY 17TH)

Lived a little over two hundred years after Christ ; founded monasticism, as it were accidentally.

1. Rich parents, orphan at twenty. Longed to follow Christ. On hearing in church, " If thou wilt be perfect," etc., he gave everything to the poor, and lived as hermit in a tomb (near his own village) for fifteen years.

Great temptations, and visions of evil spirits, etc.

2. At thirty-five, went off into desert. Shut himself up in an old fort and never saw anyone.

3. After twenty years, his friends broke in the door, and he emerged in perfect health of body and mind. Many came to live the solitary life near him, under his guidance. Thus monasticism spread.

4. Men were then much afraid of evil spirits : Antony taught that they were powerless, and to be despised and disregarded. In his last words to disciples : " You know how savage they are and how powerless : therefore fear them not."

5. After six years he withdrew again, but not to absolute seclusion. Died aged over 100, buried secretly.

6. What one life can do ; influence of example ; he showed forth the achievement of self-mastery and inward peace ; he was always joyous and calm.

ST. WOLSTAN

(JANUARY 19TH)

1. Born Long Itchington, Warwickshire. Educated at monasteries of Evesham and Peterborough. Monk at Worcester, then Prior.

Not learned, but holy and of great charity.

Made Bishop by Edward Confessor in 1062.

2. Rebuilt Worcester Cathedral (present crypt is his); persuaded Aldwyn to found Priory at Great Malvern.

Always about his diocese, preaching, confirming and encouraging all.

Sinners came to him for confession from all over England.

3. Then Norman Conquest : Lanfranc thought Wolstan not learned enough ; the story goes that when called on to resign, he laid his crozier on St. Edward's tomb (who had given it to him) and by miracle it could not be moved. Anyhow, he kept his see ; stood up boldly to William ; became a bridge of conciliation between Saxon and Norman.

4. Bristol was centre of slave trade, which bought English women and children for sale abroad. Neither King nor Church were able to suppress it. Wolstan spent three months in Bristol persuading the traders and the scandal was ended.

5. Died 1095. Robert Bishop of Hereford was warned by a vision and arrived after three days to sing his requiem.

Pilgrimages for centuries, but tomb was rifled by Henry VIII.

6. Just a bishop who did his work. That is how God's kingdom is kept going, each one doing his own job.

But with charity, c.f. prayer for feast.

"Pour into us O Lord the spirit of Thy love : that by the intercession of Bishop Wolstan, Thy Bishop and Confessor, we may be worthy to taste thy sweetness in a happy eternity, through Our Lord Jesus Christ."

ST. POLYCARP

(JANUARY 26TH)

1. Last of sub-apostolic men, died 155. Disciple of St. John.

John died about 100. Polycarp became Bishop of Smyrna (a good church, cf. Apocalypse ii, 8). He kept them faithful, repeating John's discourses.

2. Heretics Docetae : against that, Polycarp's tradition from John.

3. Ignatius of Antioch stayed at Smyrna on his way to martyrdom.

Hence Polycarp's epistle to Phillippi asking news. Note joy, and love of D.N.J.C.

4. His journey to Rome (over 80) about the Easter question.

5. The persecution at Smyrna, and burning alive of Polycarp, described in letter from Christians of Smyrna. (Brownlow's *Early History of the Church of God*, p. 355.)

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, C.P.D.

(JANUARY, 27TH)

1. Every saint has description attached.

Confessor = "not a martyr"; one who "confessed" faith in Christ.

"Doctor" of the Church = Teacher. Great minds : milestones in doctrinal development : Athanasius, Aquinas. (Credo at Mass).

2. Chrysostom lived soon after Constantine (Eastern and Western Empire). Antioch.

His mother had to send him to the pagan schools, but taught him piety herself.

About 20, met Bishop Meletius: became monk, then anchorite in cave (six years altogether).

3. Deacon, then priest, about 40. ("Golden Mouth"). His eloquence made him famous at once. "God made the earth for all."

Applause in church.

4. Greatest Commentator. Homilies of the literal school—especially on St. Paul.

5. Constantinople vacant: Arcadius sent for Chrysostom secretly, and made him Patriarch.

6. Reforms: simplicity in palace (built hospital with savings of first year).

Clergy, avarice and evil manners.

Laity, luxury and dress.

7. Political disturbances. People looked to Chrysostom. Eudoxia. Intrigues.

8. Easter Eve, arrested by soldiers in baptistery. Exiled to Armenia. After three years moved to Caucasus, treated cruelly, died on the way.

Last words: "Glory be to God for all things."

ST. BRIGID OF KILDARE

(FEBRUARY 1ST)

1. The new opportunities of women, not so new. In Catholic times women ruled like men.

2. St. Brigid born during Ireland's conversion. Father a chieftain of Ulster.

Still young, consecrated herself to God. Was very beautiful and prayed to be made ugly, and this happened by an eye trouble.

3. Before age of twenty was professed by St. Mel, a disciple of Patrick. When she received her white robe the wooden altar steps on which she knelt budded out green like a tree in spring; also her beauty returned; said to have great likeness to B.V.M.

4. Other women joined her, and she began the first convent in Ireland. It flourished, and she had to travel about Ireland founding others.

5. Then to Leinster and started Kildare. It grew into a great centre of religion and learning; e.g. illumination of manuscripts (which St. Brigid was said to have been taught by angels). At Kildare she founded houses for men as well as women, and designated Conlath to be Bishop. For centuries Kildare was ruled jointly by the Bishop and the Abbess, and the Abbess was chief of all the convents.

6. And yet St. Brigid was not too dignified herself, and often looked after the cattle.

To feed the poor she sold the furniture and vestments, etc.

Died aged seventy, A.D. 525. Viaticum from St. Nenidh, a priest whom she had brought up from boyhood.

7. In ninth century her body was removed to Downpatrick, and interred with St. Patrick (She had known him, and an old chronicle says there was "so great a charity between them that they had only one heart and one mind.")

Her title with the Irish: "The Mary of the Gael."

ST. PETER DAMIAN

(FEBRUARY 23RD)

1. Appropriate to Lent. A little-known saint. (The saints show different sides of our Lord's character. Damian is like Our Lord clearing the temple.) Lived in dark days. Eleventh century. Italy.

2. Nearly died of neglect after birth. Orphan : slave to brother. Rescued by another brother. Distinguished teacher at University.

His penance, and charity, and purity.

3. About 25, disgusted with world, retired to hermitage of Fonte-Avellana.

Great penances : bread and water, with vegetables twice a week.

Long hours in prayer, with arms out. Disciplines, etc. (Exaggerated penances, perhaps : but he was determined for victory over the body.)

4. He became Prior.

Sad state of the Church, owing to wars and disturbances: Simony and clerical incontinence.

He kept urging Pope to act.

Wrote a book on the vices of the clergy.

5. Made Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia (by threat of excommunication).

Rest of his life fighting against abuses. Often legate of Pope. Died 1072.

6. A Reformer (not like Luther) who began with reforming himself. So now, in all efforts at bettering the world, master ourselves by penance : get Christ formed in our own hearts.

ST. DAVID

(MARCH 1ST)

Gospel of feast.—Matt. xxv, 14-23.

1. It takes all sorts to make a world—different gifts, etc., but all can do something.

So in Kingdom; sanctity doesn't mean all one pattern, but doing what we can.

Always Our Lord wants useful people: living up to their responsibilities.

2. Hence this parable of Talents. (A talent = £240; the lord wanted his capital kept busy. Complete the story with verses 24-30.)

3. "Talent," *any* gift; not only exceptional ones.

We must *use* them, even take risks with them. The one thing Our Lord won't stand is to bury them out of fear of Him.

Too many talent-buriers about, too many timid legalists, and the Church suffers.

4. cf. parallel parable of the Pounds (Luke xix, 11); mingled with a judgment-on-the-Jews theme.

The last words seem fierce—an Oriental despot: remember God's "judgments," on Jews or on us, are not His personal acts of choice, but the inevitable results we bring on ourselves.

5. But the great lesson of these parables: our *responsibility* for using opportunities.

"Intra in gaudium Domini tui."

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

(MARCH 7TH)

1. Another Doctor. Thirteenth Century—the golden age of Christendom. (Blossoming-time : spring after long winter.) Francis and Dominic.

2. Born near Naples. (Noble family, relative of Emperor.) Studied at Monte Cassino, and University of Naples (under Peter Hibernus—a Celt). Joined Dominicans, age sixteen or seventeen. Family had him arrested and confined for two years (“*titione fugavit*”—gift of chastity). In prison he studied. Released.

3. To Paris with Albertus Magnus, to teach. Always praying, teaching, writing, travelling. *Summa*.

4. Often in ecstasy. “*Bene scripsisti de Me.*” So for thirty years. Summoned to Council at Lyons, he died on the way (in Cistercian monastery).

5. For ordinary Catholics, his chief connection is with B. Sacrament. Feast of Corpus Christi—Office—our Benediction hymns, and *Adoro Te*.

Learning kills piety? Not in St. Thomas.

Summa with Bible at Trent. “*Angelic Doctor.*”

But above all, *Saint*.

ST. JOSEPH'S FAITHFULNESS

(MARCH 19TH)

1. A late devotion in the Church.

It is as if the Church's eyes are fixed on the central Figure first ; then, after some time, begin to notice Mary, and later Joseph. (As we, at some pageant.)

2. Just as devotion to Mary is because she is Mother of God, so devotion to Joseph because His foster-father. He held a trust, and was faithful.

3. He had a trust—the Greatest—and was faithful : that's his whole story.

Never found wanting : ready for emergencies : thought things out (as the angel found him doing) and so, trusting in God, was able to move calmly amongst the greatest mysteries that ever happened on earth.

4. Kept his head, and kept his heart up, and so was faithful to his trust.

You and I will not have to make such great decisions as St. Joseph had to in those months. But we have our own lives to live ; our decisions, very important to God how to meet them. Let us pray that we also may be dependable and trustworthy to those who depend on us, and faithful to the trust God has given us.

ST. JOSEPH'S POWER

(MARCH 19TH)

"To other saints God gives power to help us in this need or that; but the glorious St. Joseph has power for everything, as I know by experience."

So St. Teresa ; for Our Lord (she adds) likes to do St. Joseph's will now in heaven as He did in Nazareth.

Also " Every year on his feast I ask for some special favour and I have always had my desires fulfilled."

Special graces that often come from St. Joseph :

Chastity and victory over temptations against it.

A great love and devotion for B.V.M.

Special light in perplexities.

Especially in choosing a state of life.

Joy in hard work for others.

A happy death.

ST. JOSEPH'S EXAMPLE

(FOR THE SOLEMNITY)

1. Humility. Contrast between great office and self-effacement.

No other saint gave commands to Christ.

Yet self-effacement! No recorded word!

2. Even in necessary self-assertion (e.g. in family life), we should try to efface ourselves.

Instinct of self-assertion, e.g. when a baby cries not getting enough attention.

Same with grown-ups. St. Joseph never "on his dignity."

3. Even in the early history of Church St. Joseph managed to efface himself. But now:

Patron of chastity. (If people are thinking all day and all night of their own desires, they have no time to serve Jesus and Mary. Control of *all* passions.)

Patron of happy death.

Patron of Universal Church, "Household of faith."

4. Joseph's life was to serve Jesus and Mary.

A Christian idea = "women and children first."

In home too: Christian husband as "servant of all."

Not like an Oriental household's husband, an absolute monarch.

To create a home—a real home—nothing more Godlike.

Serve Jesus and Mary—live *and* die happy.

ST. GEORGE

(APRIL 23RD)

Comment on Gospel for feast.—John xv, 1-7.

1. "*I am the true Vine.*" The Incarnation as a vital, slow-growing, fruit-bearing enterprise.

2. "*My Father the husbandman.*" History, especially Church history, unrolls itself under God's fostering care : so every reason for faith, and none for worry.

3. "*He will take away*"—most terrible fate, to be given up as a failure even by God. So again in verse 6.

4. "*He will purge it*"—here is the explanation of the sufferings of the Church, martyrdoms especially ; and of all pain in this life

5. "*Abide in me, and I in you,*" etc. The vital union of Christ and His members. "Sanctifying grace"—they live by His life. His thoughts come into their mind, His power comes into their will, His love into their hearts.

6. "*Without me you can do nothing.*" Hence need of frequent Communion to maintain close union.

7. "*You shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done.*" Because if we are in real union with Christ, we shall

(a) Know His Mind well enough to want only what He wants ; and

(b) His Will will move in conjunction with our desire, as a good Superior backs up a subordinate whom he trusts.

We should act more confidently on this great promise.

8. But remember that the Church uses this gospel for the feast of Martyrs !

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

(APRIL 30TH)

Gospel for the feast.—Matt. xxv, 1-13.

The Bridegroom goes to fetch the Bride ; and the ten virgins wait to escort the wedded couple, in torchlight procession, to Bridegroom's house. A long wait. Some were "wise," with their wits about them ; others "thoughtless."

1. The Interpretation :

The Bridegroom=Christ.

So in prophets, Israel is the (often faithless) bride of God. So Baptist calls himself only "friend of the Bridegroom." (St. John iii, 29.) And Christ : "When the Bridegroom is taken away . . ." (Matt. ix, 15.)

The Bride = the Church.

See Eph. v, 25-27, and Apoc. xxi, 2 ; xxii, 17.

The coming of the Bridegroom is Christ coming to fetch His Church at the last day.

2. The five Virgins—they don't *reject* Christ, like the wicked husbandmen ; they are practising Christians, but not "wise" ; not practical and thoughtful enough : no reckoning of possibilities—no reserve of fuel—too much content with things as they are.

3. So most Catholics. And hence the crippling of the Church's work. St. Catherine's life was one living protest against sleepiness of Christ's apostles.

4. Each of us has to keep awake, keep our lamp alight—lest we awake in darkness and despair.

"Receive this burning Light" . . . etc.

ST. JOHN

(MAY 6TH, BEFORE LATIN GATE)

1. Brother of James, son of Zebedee. (Probably disciples of Baptist.) Our Lord nicknamed them "Sons of Thunder."

2. "Disciple whom Jesus loved." One of the Three. "On His breast" at Last Supper. At the Cross (guardian of Mary).

Prominent with Peter in Acts.

3. Asia Minor, Ephesus (Irenaeus).

Persecution of Domitian : exile to Patmos :

Return to Ephesus.

Writing of Apocalypse.

Gospel (inspired, but individual). Not only outward facts. Against Cerinthus, a Jewish Gnostic, who said Jesus was mere man, in whom Christ dwelt from Baptism until Passion.

4. Died about A.D. 100, long after all the other apostles. His horror of heresy (story of avoiding Cerinthus at Baths).

"My little children, love one another." (Reported by St. Jerome.)

PETER THE ROCK

(THE GOSPEL OF SS. PETER AND PAUL, JUNE 29TH)

1. Gives us the reason of St. Peter's headship. His personal devotion to Christ gave him insight, and he was the first to make the act of faith. Christ confirmed that faith of his, and it will never fail.

2. That is the role of his successors. Rome has always kept the tradition of faith, not gone in for speculations.

3. Hence Holy See is centre of Unity—Rock on which church is built.

Different nations, variety in unity.

4. England ought to be one of the brightest jewels in Peter's crown.

But robbed of Faith. Not without struggle—but English people are not clearheaded, and they did not see what was happening.

5. Lost Peter, lost everything . . . Gained empire and prosperity? "All these will I give thee . . ." But empire and prosperity not enough: things of the spirit more important.

6 England just beginning to find out what she's lost. One day our country will come back. Hasten it with desire.

ST. PETER : HIS CALL

(JUNE 29TH)

“ *Having brought their ships to land, leaving all things, they followed Him.*”—Luke v, 11.

1. The call to “leave all things” does not often come so suddenly as this.

The apostles had already become friendly with Christ, but in the end they had to make their choice all in a moment. They stare at Him to make sure He means it; then—like good sailors—go and bring their boats in and leave everything tidy for future users; then they come back to Christ and put themselves at His disposal.

2. Seldom is it necessary to “leave all things” so suddenly. But Christ looks at our inward heart: “*Would he come? Would he leave all things if I asked him?*”

3. The all-important thing is that we should be *ready* to.

In the end, only two sorts of people: those who have “left all things” in the sense that they would put God before everything else whatever, and those who would put something or somebody in front of God.

Do you put God first? Or is there something . . .

4. We come to Mass, why?—to fulfil obligation, yes—but more, to *do* something.

To tell Our Lord you *belong* to Him, and are ready to leave all things whenever He wants you.

Leaving all things does not mean that we become perfect all at once. Still liable to lapses of judgment or courage.

5. St. Peter genuinely left all things, yet was still liable to faults: e.g. lost confidence walking to Christ on water.

Rebuked Our Lord for prophesying Passion.

Drew sword in Gethsemane.

The denial.

Even after Pentecost he was still liable to errors of judgment in his practical work for Christ:

e.g. His concessions to Judaizers in Antioch.

His traditional attempt to leave Rome: "*Domine quo vadis?*"

But he *had* left all things for Christ, and he never went back on that.

PETER'S DENIAL AND REPARATION

(JUNE 29TH)

Eight pictures :—

1. The Last Supper. Peter's first communion.
2. The Washing of feet.
3. On the way to the Garden. "Even if I have to die with Thee, I will not deny Thee."
4. During the Agony "They were asleep."
5. Arrival of Judas. Peter with the sword. "*Relicto eo omnes fugierunt.*"
6. In the court of Caiphas. The threefold denial. "And the Lord turning looked on Peter."
7. By the lake of Galilee. The threefold reparation.
8. Peter as Pope, teaching the Flock that Christ is the Son of the living God.
The tear-marks on his cheeks.

PETER'S OFFICE

(Epistle for Holy Name)

1. Peter and John cure the lame man (Acts iii, 1-10).
They preach to crowd—arrested—taken before Sanhedrin next day (Acts iv, 5-12).

2. "No other name whereby we must be saved." This is what Peter always has to say.

3. Non-Catholics think Pope takes place of Christ. In a way, yes: His Vicar; speaks with His authority. (As priest takes place of Christ in Mass; as parent takes place of God in the home.)

4. But Peter doesn't *hide* Christ. His function is to keep Christ before men's minds.

5. Everything he does is for that:
When he condemns false teaching.
When he exhorts to frequent Communion
When he asks for help for Foreign Missions.
When he condemns international hatred.

6. The Holy Name itself would long ago have been forgotten if Christ had not founded Church; and Church would long ago have crumbled and vanished if Christ had not provided it with visible head.

7. So thank God for the Faith, and remember that everything—Creed, Sacraments, Pope, churches, schools—have one purpose only—to make opportunity for Jesus: for there is "no other name . . ."

ST. JAMES APOSTLE

(JULY 25TH)

Gospel for the Feast.—Matt. xx, 20-23

1. This gospel to-day because St. James was one of the sons of Zebedee ; the incident is not entirely to his credit, but Christ's promise of martyrdom is like the canonization beforehand of this glorious apostle.

2. Watch them come up. Two fine young men—with their mother to do the talking—she wants to see her sons rise in the world. A ceremonial request—she kneels to Christ—they ask for Christ's consent before saying what they want. (Mark x, 35.) “*What wilt thou?*” Then it comes out.

3. Astonishing request, to us : disappointing for Christ. Within a few days of Jerusalem and the Passion ; and Christ has told them what is to happen more than once. But no—they can't understand ; a little suffering, they think, a little fighting, perhaps, but then victory and Christ reigning King in Jerusalem, and they on the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes. And why should not James and John be on His right and left, chief ministers of the King—they feel they have as much right as St. Peter !

4. What is He to say to all that ?

“*You know not what it is you ask for !*” what it *means* to be close to Me in that way : something quite different from what you expect.

5. But He will not send them away rebuked this time ; rather He tries to enlighten and encourage them. And

how wonderful this next saying—a warning and an invitation both at once !

“ *Can you drink of the chalice ?* ”—are you ready for suffering, defeat, unknown dangers ? And, since this warning alone might frighten them away, He adds :

“ *That I shall drink ?* ” This arouses their desire to be with Him and go through whatever He goes through. Without hesitation they answer, We can.

6. “ *My chalice indeed you shall drink,* ” etc. Loving, grateful, prophetic, grace-giving words. St. John will remember them again as he stands by the Cross, and St. James when he comes to be martyred by Herod. For St. James those words are the point of the gospel to-day.

7. For us the point is Our Lord’s wonderful goodness : how He knows what we are capable of, puts up with our stupidity, understanding and tender, not telling us too much all at once, leading us on and using every bit of good in us.

So we can joyfully put ourselves in Christ’s hands, e.g. when we go to Communion ; ask Him to show us more and make us stronger. What we *must* have is goodwill.

Above all, in sorrows, disappointments, unexpected calamity : hear His voice saying, “ *Can you drink of the chalice that I have drunk of ?* ”

ST. ANNE

(JULY 26TH)

“ *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field; which a man having found, hid it and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls ; who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had, and bought it.* ”—From the Gospel of her Mass : Matt. xiii.

1. St. Anne—tree from which grew the Mystical Rose—shrine where God's power wrought the glorious wonder of the Immaculate Conception—the mother from whom Mary learned how to be a mother.

2. The gospel of her Mass. (Expand the little stories of treasure and pearl, stressing readiness of finders to let everything else go.)

3. We can take it in three ways :

(a) The man who found the treasure is God, and the treasure is Mary : God the Son "sold all He had"—*exinanivit semetipsum*—and bought that hidden treasure with His blood ; for the Immaculate Conception *was* won by Christ's death, though taking place before.

(b) The man who found the treasure is God, and the treasure is every human soul—St. Anne's, or yours or mine. For Christ has bought us every one, as if singly, by His sacrifice : " He loved *me* and delivered Himself for *me*."

In the case of St. Anne, or any other saint, God's speculation is successful.

But what of you or me ? The pearl of great price *might* turn out a fraud after all, only imitation, after the merchant had sacrificed all to get possession. Terrible if we disappoint God like that !

(c) So the third way : the finder is you or I, and the treasure (and the pearl) is God and His Will or Kingdom.

When that is shown clearly to us, everything else has to go by the board.

Some day you may make the great discovery, and then will be the time to collect your whole life together, everything you can lay hands on, and risk it all on one throw.

ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

(JULY 31ST)

1. Soldier, converted by reading Lives of Saints. Great figure in Counter-Reformation ; recalled Catholic minds to the life of Christ.

2. He saw that *individuals* must be gained.
Hence Exercises.

3. Hence, too, the Society of Jesus.
Picked men : absolute devotion : went everywhere, for St. Ignatius saw the whole battlefield.

4. We want another such Saint in these days : i.e. one with world-wide view.

Pray for his coming.

Still true, that only by individuals living life of Christ can the world be saved.

ST. STEPHEN

(AUGUST 3RD)

1. The first martyr of the Church. (*Stephanos*, a crown).
2. Stephen the deacon. Powerful speaker, of the Greek party.
3. As yet Christianity seemed a Jewish sect. The apostles went to the Temple, etc., etc.
4. Stephen was the spokesman of the party of freedom (no doubt taking up the preaching of Our Lord on the Jewish rejection of the Kingdom), and came into conflict with the same rulers who crucified Christ.
5. What happened—(Acts vi and vii).
6. Saul. Prayed for by Stephen. St. Paul achieved the work that Stephen died for.
“The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.”
The Faith spread by those who are reckless of their own comfort.

ST. LAURENCE

(AUGUST 10TH)

"Hilarem enim datorem diligit Deus."

1. Two stories of him :

How he surrendered the "Treasures of the Church."
"Assatum est jam, versa."

2. A fair example of good-humour under difficulties.
One of the most valuable departments of Charity.

3. Value to oneself. Makes life so much easier. Saves nerve-power. When you make a mountain out of a mole-hill you put on strain. Hardly anything is worth that. Sermon on the Mount. "Be not solicitous."

4. Value to others. Even *one* good-humoured person in a family—while he's there all goes well. If all are good-humoured, a happy family. You can be good-humoured even in disagreements.

5. "I'm not made that way. Can't do it." That's not true.

Keep on saying to yourself "Irritability wastes good nerve-power. I'm going to be a good-humoured person." Act so (even like an actor) at first, then you get to like it.

ST. CLARE

(AUGUST 12TH)

In her tiny roof-garden at San Damiano (five yards by two, surrounded with higher walls on three sides, and an opening on the fourth looking across the plain to the hills) St. Clare cultivated three kinds of flowers :—

Violets, for humility.

Lilies, for purity.

Roses, for charity.

The three most *Christian* virtues.

Christianity means a revolution in the soul : the dethroning of Self and the enthroning of God.

Humility and Purity achieve this revolution as to the two most powerful instincts of human nature.

But it is all nothing without Charity: Charity is the real Reign of God.

ST. LOUIS

(AUGUST 25TH)

1. To have a saint for a king ?

King Alfred, Edward Confessor. St. Louis.

2. Twelfth century—Nobles unruly and tyrannical.

Louis only twelve at accession. When a man, worked to put France right. Forbade wars, and punished injustice. Made good laws and judges. The Oak at Vincennes (where he sat accessible to all).

3. Piety. Up at midnight for matins.

Great love for Mass ; even on journeys.

His love of God first always. His mother used to say to him as a boy : “ I would rather see you dead at my feet than you should ever commit a mortal sin.”

Wanted to be a monk, but Queen refused consent.

4. Marvellous pity for poor and suffering.

Every day at home 122 poor people were fed ; often he waited on them himself, and fed the blind ones.

Special journeys to see the poor.

One Good Friday, as he went barefoot to church, he met a dreadful leper, and went over to give him alms and kissed his hand.

5. The Crusades. (Sorties of Christendom besieged.)

Turks took Jerusalem from Christians in 1246, and Louis answered Pope's appeal for Crusade against Egypt ; took Damietta, but was cut off and taken prisoner : might have escaped, but refused to leave his men. Ransomed for a million gold bezants.

Went again on crusade twenty-two years later, but plague broke out in camp at Carthage. His death.

6. A great king and a great saint.

Each because of the other. Our state of life sanctifies us and our sanctity perfects our state of life.

BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST

(AUGUST 29TH)

1. The great saint standing between Old and New Testament. Early Christians had a great devotion to him—friend and cousin of Christ. Also because they were closer to the events, and they would have said, “It all began with John Baptist”; so all the gospels begin with him.

2. His striking death—He was calling the nation to penance, and here was Herod. . . Doubtless his disciples suggested compromise . . . The rest of the story, and Herod’s contrasted cowardice.

3. Example of courage, both of fearlessness and endurance; we have need of both.

4. Fearlessness. If you’re really trying to serve God, occasions will come. “They’ll say this or that about me.” “I’ll lose my job.”

“Fear not,” says Christ.

5. Endurance. More often needed.

Illness, stupidity, or malice.

Carry on with your duty (no need to be made a door-mat—but . . .).

Not to be discouraged; nor waste time pitying self.

Remember Christ, attempting the mightiest task with the most unpromising material. “He that shall endure to the end . . .”

ST. MATTHEW .

(SEPTEMBER 21ST)

Matt. ix, 9-17

1. The Publican. Our Lord not particular as to who His disciples were. Looked into the soul. What had been going on in the soul of Matthew?

2. The feast. It was Our Lord's way to mix up with everybody, sinners as well, even unrepentant (Simon the Pharisee). As far as we can see, Christ made no difference with sinners.

Well, but isn't that encouraging them?

Anyhow it is Christ's way.

3. One limitation—"bad companions," when we know they would lead us into sin.

We are not sinless. Even avoiding these we must not despise.

But except for that—

4. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." A favourite quotation of Christ: Religious duties, yes; but love and goodwill far more important.

5. *iv. 14-17*. Fasting. Same thing: external religion not enough. Some of it necessary: e.g. going to Temple. But love and goodwill *first*. Oh, what a different world if we all understood Christ!

SS. COSMAS AND DAMIAN, MARTYRS

(SEPTEMBER 27TH)

1. Diocletian. Last and worst persecution.

Christians had been left free and come out into open. Diocletian favourable for nineteen years then his colleague Galerius him to persuaded a persecution. Final clash between God and Cæsar.

2. Christians now numerous (perhaps half population of the capital Nicomedia: notably in Imperial Palace). Determined effort made to uproot Faith. Successive edicts:

Churches to be dismantled.

Scriptures to be delivered up.

Ecclesiastics to be imprisoned.

Ecclesiastics offered choice of sacrificing or death.

Same edicts extended to laity.

3. Christians resist; show great enthusiasm, though many fall away. Thousands of martyrs of every age and both sexes. Mob violence added to official persecution. Crowds of Christians banished to mines.

The persecution lasted ten years till Constantine.

4. Cosmas and Damian, in Cilicia. Twin brothers. Famous in medical science: but accepted no fees for healing. They made many converts. Denounced, taken before prefect, tortured, thrown into sea and escaped; finally beheaded.

5. They are mentioned every day in Mass.

If we cannot die for Christ now, at any rate live for Him.

ST. LUKE, EVANGELIST

(OCTOBER 18TH)

1. Importance of reading the Gospels.

2. Possible to be saved without reading.

Life of Christ in the Church and Sacraments.

3. But fact remains that in the thirty-three years God was manifest among men. Everything comes from that ; and only way to study that is to read the Gospels.

4. In the thirty-three years we have every example of virtue.

This and that God would do if He became man : *did*, *when* He became man.

5. And what do we find ? Impossibly out of reach ?

No, perfectly ordinary. Miracles, and sinless, yes : but it was the very ordinariness of the Messiah's life that scandalised the Jews.

6. Ordinary, but absolutely perfect. His life as high as His teaching, e.g. forgive " from your hearts." So " Pater dimitte illis."

7. So read the Gospels. St. Luke best to begin with.

He wrote with Our Lady's help ; and he is the evangelist of the Sacred *humanity*.

ST. MARTIN

(NOVEMBER 11TH)

1. Born about 400, son of a Roman soldier. Ran off for instructions at ten. Soldier at sixteen.

2. Amiens. The beggar.

3. Baptized at 18 ; and went to St. Hilary.

4. Made Bishop by stratagem (lured into city by a false sick call, and acclaimed as Bishop).

Converted a half-pagan diocese (Tours).

5. Illness, and prayed for death.

“Non recuso laborem.”

6. Last illness, “Let me look up to heaven.”

7. A great pioneer in many ways (monasticism : resisted death penalty for Priscillian heretics).

Saw Christ in his neighbour.

Every now and then somebody takes Christ seriously and you get a saint.

ST. THOMAS, APOSTLE

(DECEMBER 21ST)

1. Went as far as India. Constant tradition ; and the Malabar Christians (isolated for hundreds of years, but kept their Faith, which they trace to him).

2. St. John tells us most about him.

(a) " Let us also go, that we may die with him."

(b) " Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way." Which brought the answer : " I am the Way the Truth and the Life."

(c) After the Resurrection : " My Lord and my God."

3. So he was

adventurous and exploring ;

critical and slow to be convinced ;

made up for that by His love and devotion.

4. Love is the most important part of faith : of *our* faith.

P.—ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS

GOD'S MERCIES

“*The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.*” — Psalms lxxxviii, 1 (Introit for Feast of Sacred Heart).

I. The glorious Mercy of God—that mingling of almighty power, immovable justice, closest knowledge and infinite love—the Creator’s feeling for His creatures—is the constant theme of the Church’s praise.

II. But here it is “mercies”; she invites us to count up, each for himself, what the Mercy of God has done for us.

My mercies :

1. Being created. God called *me* out of nothing, passing over millions of others possible. Marvellous, incredible fact this !

2. Baptism and the true faith. So many without it—other mercies for them, doubtless—but *this* great mercy for *me*.

3. When I sinned, perhaps gravely, God waited and waited. Where should I be now but for *this* mercy ?

4. When I repented at last God came running to forgive me.

5. All the *external* graces of my life—new friends met, books read opportunely, circumstances conspiring for my spiritual good—looking back over your life you see God’s providence.

6. The *interior* graces—constant, uncountable—each one a thoughtful *gift* from God.

7. Not to mention all the mercies which I share with Catholics in general—the Mass, the Sacraments—what a “crowning mercy” is every Communion!

III. “*Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo.*” That is, in heaven, when we shall at last appreciate all this. The “almighty and merciful God” will show unto of His Mercy, that is Himself; and we shall sing His mercies for ever.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

1. Doctrine: God is everywhere. Pervading the universe; and concentrated in our soul. Like water in a sponge. Even closer, because he must co-operate in all our actions, even sins.

2. Therefore to say “God sees us” is very inadequate. We are floating in God. He is all through and through us.

3. To “place ourselves in the presence of God” all we have to do is to shut out creatures (even our body) and descend into depths of our soul: and there is God. We come into Reality, like coming out of a tunnel.

4. We ought to live habitually in presence of God; not thinking about it all the time, but able to turn the thought on easily at any time. (Temptation, prayer, or for calm.)

5. There’s generally something the matter with us over-civilised people; but suppose I have perfect health! I don’t think of it all the time, but advert to it now and then—realise it. So with habitual presence of God. Christ’s promise fulfilled, “My Father will love Him, and we will come.”

THE "THEOLOGICAL" VIRTUES

"*Faith, Hope and Charity—these three.*"—I Cor. xiii, 13.

1. Catechism answer 314. *Theos* = God. "Theology" = the science about God. "Theological virtues" = the three virtues that put us into immediate relationship with God, Who made us out of nothing.

2. *Faith*, by which we know our Maker when He reveals Himself to us, and believe what He tells us about Himself.

Hope, by which we trust ourselves to God, Who has brought us out of nothing, sure that He is not merely playing with us.

Charity, by which we realise that our Maker *loves* us, and give Him our heart and our service in return.

3. These three more-than-natural powers or capabilities are planted in germ in our soul at baptism. They should be ever growing, with our life-long growth.

4. If they remain feeble, it is for want of tending and exercise. Make *acts* of faith, hope and charity. More faith, more confidence, more love—till God fills our whole life.

LOVING GOD

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

1. The basic duty of our existence.

Yet how love one we have never seen? (e.g. a child who has never seen its parents.) We have never seen God.

2. Yes, but we can love the never-yet-seen if we hear about them, and from their photograph, etc.

All the universe tells us about God.

And Jesus Christ *is* God, though we *see* only His human nature.

God has sent us His photograph.

3. So we are to *learn* to love God, by attending to what we know of Him.

"O my God, *teach* me to love Thee" (Catechism 337).

4. "Above all things" (Catechism 336), i.e. putting God before *anything* else, when it comes to a choice.

5. And the everyday *test* of whether we love God:
"He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" (I John iv, 20).

THE ANGELS OF GOD

"Praise ye the Lord, all His angels; praise ye Him all His hosts."—Psalms cxlviii, 2.

1. Adoration is the first duty of man to God, but how little fulfilled!

How little prayer there is in most lives. How little even with us Catholics, and that mostly prayer of petition.

With infinite mercy God willed man out of nothing into

being, so that man might know and praise the Eternal Beauty and Goodness which God is. And man remains unseeing and unresponsive—ready to praise anything *except* the One Thing which is most worthy of all praise.

2. This makes us glad to think of the holy Angels of God. A vaster world than ours—each of the nine choirs may be more numerous than all human race.

In their faculties of knowing and loving they tower up far out of our sight ; their praise is more worth having than ours.

We should be glad that there, at any rate, God is adored and praised. It is the whole and all-sufficient occupation of the angels.

3. The thought of it gladdened Our Lord's heart, so eager for His Father to be known and loved. He reminds us that the angels see the Father's Face. He teaches us to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

4. Hence the Church often calls on the angels to praise God for us : "Praise ye the Lord, all His angels."

And always at Mass in the Preface, the angelic choirs are named, and pictured as joining in our *Sanctus* round the altar.

5. Yes ; the angels' praise (compared with ours) is like some mighty choir and orchestra, compared with a beggar singing out of tune in the street.

And their nature in its powers is like a great aeroplane that flies round the world compared with the toy tricycle that children play with in the streets.

And yet God the Son took man's nature, not angel's. And from Annunciation to Ascension the angels found their joy in serving adoringly the One of our race Who came to take on Himself the burden of all our sins.

6. So once more be grateful for the mercies of Our God to us, and realise better in the future our primary duty of praise and adoration.

e.g. cultivate recollection in saying words of sign of Cross, or *Gloria Patri*. Or send up your adoration when you see the smoke of the incense.

ENVY AND JEALOUSY

(GOSPEL FOR SEPTUAGESIMA)

"They murmured against the master of the house."

1. To-day's gospel provides an instance of envy: one of the seven deadly sins: the lowest and meanest and most crawling.

2. Envy and jealousy go together.

Envy = sadness over the good of another: being annoyed or fed-up because someone has good qualities or good fortune that we *lack*.

Jealousy = the same thing, but concerned with something that we *possess*.

Envy wants to take something from others; jealousy wants to keep something (or someone!) all to itself. (Like the Jews towards the Gentiles: this is the point of the parable.)

3. Very little children act in this way with their toys, etc., and have to be trained out of it; but some men and women remain at that stage all their lives.

4. Envy is a frightful poison in the soul. The envious person injures himself far more than anyone else. Some vices afford pleasure, but this one only misery.

5. In its worst forms envy and jealousy lead to fearful crimes.

Through jealousy Herod massacred the Innocents.

Through envy Caiphas and the scribes delivered up Our Lord.

6. In its milder forms the same vice spoils much work

done for God. People jealous of others being praised ; touchy, seeking recognition, etc.

7. Religious people are liable to a subtle form of envy when they see the wicked or careless indulging in worldly pleasures ; they become unduly indignant and interfering. Hence some kinds of " Puritanism."

8. Envy leads to hatred. e.g. the preaching of the class-war. In that movement there is some real thirst for justice, but also much envy. And on the *other* side jealousy—to hold what they have and keep others out.

9. The evil in this (as in all other vices) comes in considering ourself first : before God and before our fellow-creatures.

10. Our Lord illustrates envy and jealousy in another parable—the elder brother of the Prodigal. He does not like meanness.

11. So let us cultivate the opposite virtue of generosity in thought and action.

" Ab ira et odio et omni mala voluntate, libera nos Domine."

PRAYING FOR OTHERS

1. November is the time when the Church directs our thoughts to the Communion of Saints.

God's Church stretching out into the next world—saints in heaven—souls in Purgatory. '

Prayer is the magic current which makes us all one.

2. But this evening think of prayer *in the Church Militant, for each other.*

This is a great part of the Communion of Saints, liable to be overlooked.

3. Good to pray for our friends who are dead ; still better to pray for them while alive. Prevention better than cure, in temporal punishment too.

4. Pray for general intentions, of course ; the Church at large ; Pope and clergy ; for sinners (a devotion dear to Sacred Heart) ; for dying sinners especially.

5. But also for individual people we are interested in, whom God inspires us to pray for. A tremendous power we have in our hands. We can make all the difference to somebody.

6. In this, as in everything, Our Lord Himself shows us the way. He prayed for individuals.

For Peter : " I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

For His disciples : " Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name whom Thou hast given to Me."

For us all, each one.

7. The saints, too, are great examples of this, e.g. St. Monica.

8. Moreover, this is a thing *everyone* can do, even those who by business or ill health are debarred from active apostolate.

Everyone can do it and it is the greatest thing to do.

9. Such prayer for individuals should be :

Confident.

Loving.

Persevering.

Backed up by some self-denial.

INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

1. Holy Ghost = Author of the Bible. Every word.
2. Different men, e.g. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. God used them, put into their mind to write, and they wrote what God wanted them to write.
3. But He used them in their own various ways and mentalities (e.g. different characteristics of Gospels).
4. Therefore when we speak of Bible, remember it is a whole literature.
cf. English literature, poetry, history, novels, etc.
So with Jewish literature, but inspired.
5. Taken together, Bible = History of God's dealings with man. Christ = the Centre of it.
6. Written by Holy Spirit, therefore has a sort of sacramental value. Makes an appeal to the human heart. A personal meaning. Never laugh at Protestants because of their devotion to the Bible.
7. Its use in Liturgy especially. Passages used in Missal, etc., are what the Church wishes us to meditate on, to discover inner secret of meaning.

ON THE ROSARY

1. Angels' knowledge is simple and immediate.
But ours slow and "sinking in."

Not real to us till our imagination has been at work on it; otherwise just words: e.g. "thousands killed in Chinese earthquake."

2. So with our religious ideas.

To many, "Christ was born on Christmas Day" is just words.

3. Need to ponder and contemplate. Hence Rosary.
It is primarily *mental*.

(But—what *was* I thinking about during that fifth mystery?)

4. The fifteen mysteries form a Life of Christ (and also of His Mother, because they are inseparable).

5. Anyone who says his Rosary daily faces daily the great facts of the Incarnation.

So he will never lose the Faith, and his understanding of it will grow, and it will bear fruit in his life.

RESISTING TEMPTATION

1. One great help to the will—Prayer.
Not merely *set* prayers, but the *habit* of turning to God.
2. To resist temptation we need :
Self-distrust. Trust in God.
3. *Express* trust in God by calling on Him.
“Lord, save me or I perish.”
This *during* the temptation. Result, access of strength at once.
4. This means living in the presence of God.
We *are* in presence of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and saints (like football players in the arena). Realise it, and we shouldn’t sin.
5. You would not dream of composing a bitter, spiteful letter in church. But *always* we are in God’s sight.

ALL-DAY RELIGION

1. Catechism answer 364. If religion isn't only to be a Sunday affair, this is very important. Religion is meant to change us : change our outward conduct, but still more to change our inward life for the better—harmony, peace and joy.

2. This means living in union with God, resting on His Will and trusting to His grace. Necessary to carry this out into details of our lives.

3. Hence “morning offering.” Prayers, works and sufferings—and play—all made precious.

4. So to “sanctify ordinary employments,” means simply renew morning offering ; not necessarily in words—no interruption of work, etc.—but just a lift-up of heart to God.

Do it often and it will become habitual.

“Be always praying ! Is that possible ? Some have realized it, till the whole of the engagements of the day have been ablaze with prayer” (Spurgeon).

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF GOD

"Great are the works of the Lord : sought out according to all His wills. His work is praise of magnificence, and His justice continueth for ever."—Ps. cx.

I. When wearied by the universal self-seeking of men in their dealings with each other (ourselves included) it is like emerging into the fresh air to turn to God's dealings with men.

The usual words—generosity and so on—fail us here, and we must fall back on "Magnificence."

II. God's Magnificence :

1. In Creation of Nature—only the entrance-hall in which God's guests, called out of nothingness, are kept waiting for a while—but how vast and beautiful.
2. In Creation of Grace—the real destiny, both of angels and men—to share God's own joy.
3. That seems like the limit even of God's magnificence. But (O felix culpa !) the Redemption goes still further. The mysterious *excess* of the Passion, taking us deep into the secret Mind of God.
4. Then the Holy Eucharist—everyday Commonness of Mass and Real Presence—easiness of confession—profusion of actual graces.

III. This is our God. Is all the giving to be on one side ? Is there nothing we can do to save our self-respect, let alone our souls ?

"Let us therefore love God because God hath first loved us" (I John iv, 19).

And let us not be frightened if the inspiration comes to give a little touch of magnificence to our sacrifice.

OUR BAPTISM

Matt. xxviii, 19

1. We don't think enough about our baptism ; it is Our Lord's first gift to each of us, full of His thoughtfulness.

2. In instituting it, He took something that existed already (symbolic lustration frequent in paganism ; Jews, too, used it in receiving proselytes ; John the Baptist popularised it) and made it into a great spiritual reality.

So Baptism, like Sacrifice, goes back into the roots of human history, waiting for Our Lord's creative touch.

3. Your own baptism is not a mere event in the past ; it is working in you still : infused grace, infused virtues, right to actual graces, etc.

4. The need is to *live up* to our baptism.

Hence the three ceremonies afterwards : all mean *perseverance*.

Virtues, like limbs, don't grow unless they are used.

5. "Keep thy baptism . . . Keep the commandments of God."

"That thou mayest meet Him."

PRAY ALWAYS

"He spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray and not to faint."—Luke xviii, 1.

1. The secret of life : to be in right relation with God our Father, *permanently*. Many treat Him as Father only by fits and starts.

By prayer Christ means treating God as our Father ; and we must pray *always*.

2. The unjust judge (Luke xviii, 1-8) ; the point is that God does regard our persevering faith.

Answers to prayer seem long coming, but really prayers *begin* to be answered at once. Especially praying for *graces* for ourselves, or others. We are *building up* the answer.

3. Another story : the friend at midnight (some incident at Nazareth ?). Luke xi, 5-8:

4. Both parables hint at a kind of *duty* on God to hear us.

"Everyone that asketh receiveth." There's nothing Our Lord says so often or so plainly as this.

Much want-of-faith even amongst Catholics. Never mind what anyone else says about prayer. Like learning to use telephone—you find out best by doing it yourself. Take Our Lord at His word, as He always likes to be taken.

CONVERSATION

1. Conversation is a great field for virtue, because it occupies so great a part of our life.

2. The responsibility of good talkers : what a lot of harm they can do, and what a lot of good, if they like.

3. Some recommendations about Conversation :

- (a) Talk of things as well as of persons. (Some people have no idea of conversation except about persons.)
- (b) Don't exaggerate, or embroider facts : habits easy to acquire and easily becoming sinful.
- (c) Don't be a "professional grumbler." (There's only one thing worse—a professional gossip.) If you must find fault with things, do it in a lighthearted way.
- (d) Leave unsaid clever unkind things ; you will always be glad later.
- (e) Don't talk about yourself much (great scope for self-denial here).
- (f) Summon up kindly and interested feelings towards everyone you talk to—acts of charity while you are talking—God made them and loves them.

IRRITABILITY

1. There are little vices or imperfections (sometimes overlooked in examination of conscience) that grow round the greater sins ; e.g. vanity, or touchiness, as distinct from pride.

2. So this irritability as distinct from anger. Anger may be good—even when it is sinful, it is strong—and get things done : i.e. real anger, a “towering rage.” But irritability is all weakness.

3. Irritability is when we are upset by little things that can't be helped ; missing a train, or when someone upsets the tea on a clean tablecloth. In such circumstances you can either accept the facts calmly and do what is necessary;—or else get peevish and do it with a bad grace.

4. Reasons for not being irritable and fretful.

(a) It is bad for yourself : shows that you are not master of yourself.

(b) Bad for others. It is catching. Also it freezes up the warmheartedness of others. Especially children.

5. Make it a matter of examination of conscience.

CONFESSION TO CHRIST

In Confession so much depends on our dispositions. The Precious Blood is like rain falling on hard pavement, on sand, or on good soil.

How can we improve our Confessions? Take three of the Gospel penitents.

I. The Prodigal.

1. Examination of Conscience amongst swine. Didn't go through the commandments, etc. : sin = separation from his Father, whom he had treated so badly.
2. Contrition : "go to my Father."
3. Amendment : "One of thy hired servants."

II. Magdalene.

1. Examination. Difference between Christ and herself.
2. Contrition : at the feet of Christ.
3. Amendment : used her gifts for Christ : close to Christ, at Cross and sepulchre.

III. Good thief.

1. Examination = the difference : "we indeed justly."
2. Contrition : "Remember me."
3. Amendment = to suffer *with* Christ.

IV. So it becomes clear : Confession should be personal, not a mere mental exercise. You have failed Him, and hope to do better, and come to tell Him so.

V. Make it all personal :

Examination of conscience = How does my friendship with Our Lord stand? Especially in details of my daily life and work?

Contrition = a coming back to Him, sure of welcome.

Amendment = Not vague and general, but about some definite points ; e.g. to say morning prayers before leaving bedroom ; to refrain from argument with So-and-so, who makes you lose your temper. And this because you know it will *please* Our Lord.

CHRIST'S OWN PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION

Preparation very important, because Sacraments give grace according to dispositions. Yet we often feel our preparation unsatisfactory. Let us look at Our Lord in this as in everything else. Once *He* "went to Holy Communion."

His preparation.

1. "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you." We must long for Holy Communion, so that we go as often as possible (the best preparation for Holy Communion on Sunday is Holy Communion on Saturday and Friday, etc.) and make spiritual communions, at other times. "Hunger and thirst after Justice."

2. "Before I suffer." Readiness for self-sacrifice.

3. (Either before or just after the inst. SS.) the washing of disciples' feet. Service of others. Practical charity : putting ourselves last.

Yet some people think scruples and anxieties and confession of every possible venial sin is the sort of preparation Christ wants !

Not a bit. An ounce of loving work is worth more than tons of thought about the state of our soul.

HUMAN RESPECT

1. A queer word, but a reality that does much spiritual havoc, especially amongst good people.

2. What is it? Not the same thing as pride, or vanity, or respect of persons, or worldliness.

It means a sort of spiritual timidity: being afraid of what "people" think.

3. It leads to (a) Sin
(b) Omission of good works.

4. Story of the Curé of Ars, who made one of his penitents walk (the only man) in the Corpus Christi procession in the streets of his home town.

5. Remedies: (1) Think that the followers of Christ must always be in a minority.

(2) "Always do what you are afraid to do." Emerson.

(3) "Never mind what everybody else does; everybody else did not die for you on the cross."—Fr. Lucas, S.J.

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